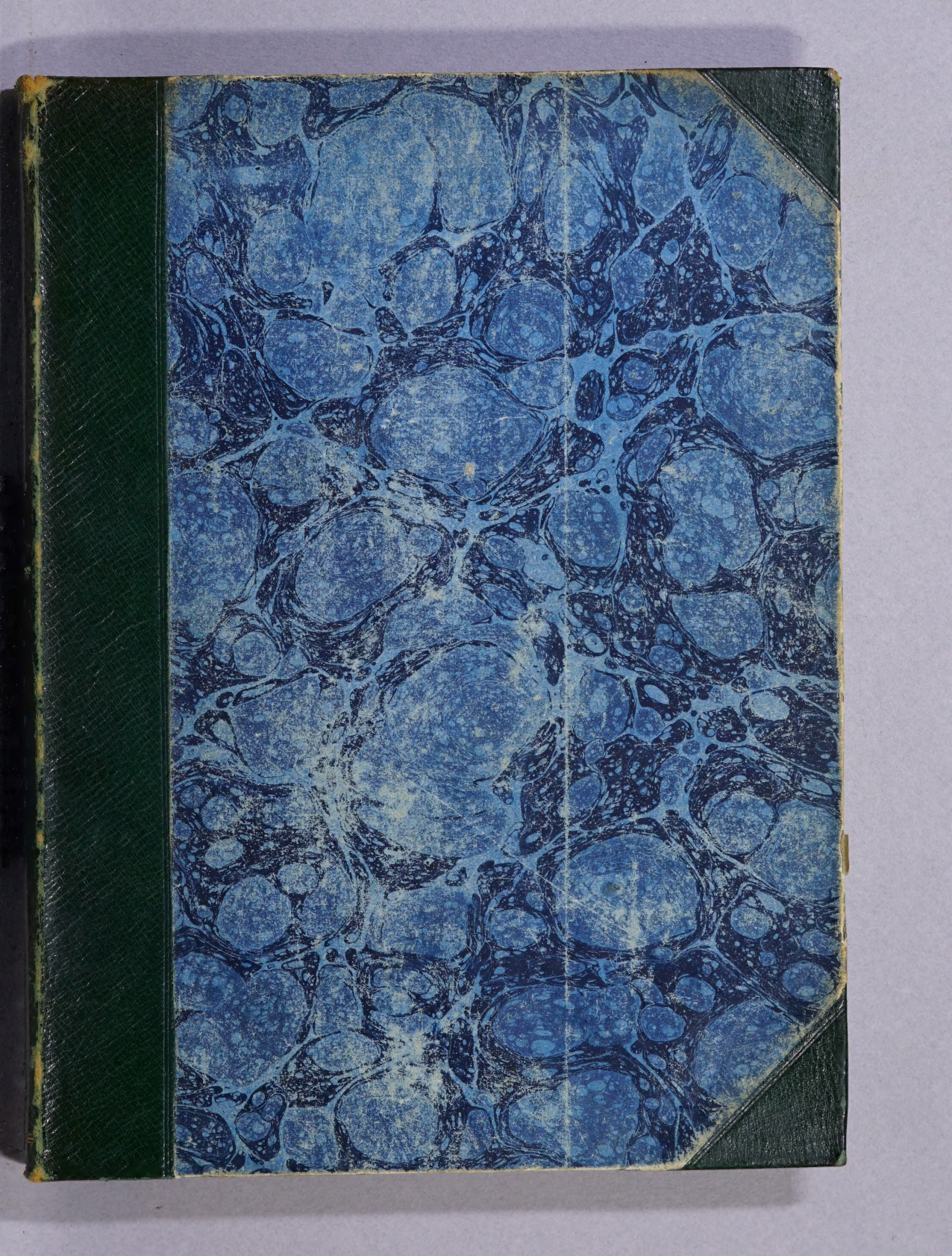
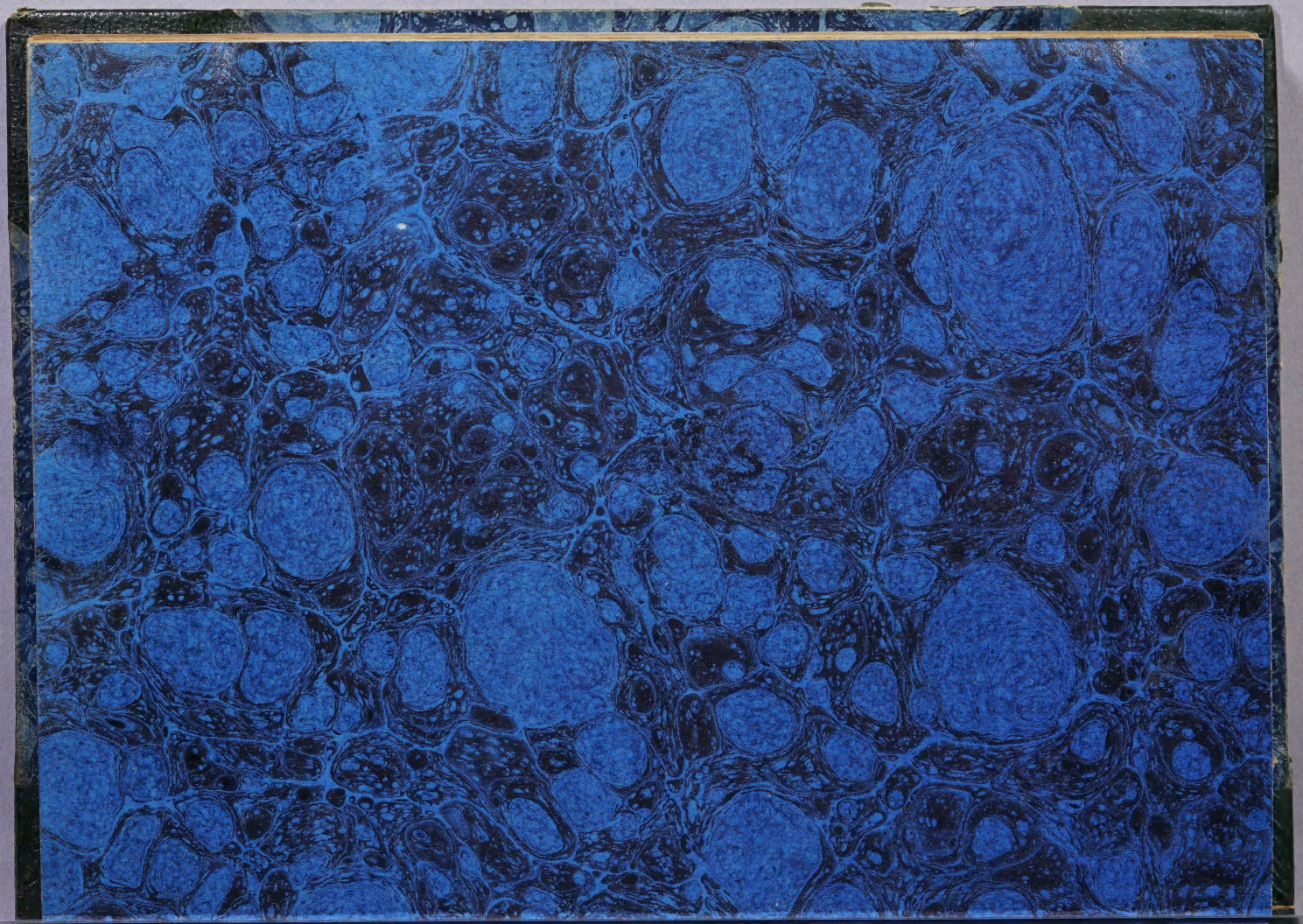




John Carter Brown.



Hon. Walter Brown
Providence, R.I.

This was answered in the answer to Posit. 1. & 2. sent unto you the last yeare.

FINIS.

AN APOLOGIE OF THE CHVRCHES IN *NEW-ENGLAND* FOR *CHVRCH-COVENANT.*

OR,

A Diſcourſe touching the Covenant between God and men, and eſpecially concerning *Church-Covenant*, that is to ſay, The Covenant which a Company doe enter into when they become a Church; and which a particular perſon enters into when he becomes a member of a Church.

Sent over in Anſwer to Maſter BERNARD, in the Yeare 1639.

And now publiſhed for the ſatisfaction of all who deſire reſolution in this point.

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1643.

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A DISCOVRSE TOVCHING THE *Covenant* between *God* and *Men*, and especially concerning *Church-Covenant*, that is to say, the *Covenant* which a Company do enter into when they become a Church, and *which a particular person enters into when he becomes a member of a Church.* 1639.

JER. 50. 5.

Come let us joyne our selves to the Lord, in a perpetuall Covenant that shall not be forgotten.

ALthough that which is foretold in these two Chapters, and namely in the fourth and fifth verses of this Chapter, was in part fulfilled when the people of God returned from Captivitie in *Babylon* at the end of seventie yeares: yet we must not limit the place to that time onely, but may extend it further to the dayes of the Gospel, and the spirituall return, not of the Jews onely, but of the Gentiles also, when men shall be converted from Pagan, Antichristian, Babylonish, or Jewish bondage and captivitie, or from slavery to sinne, and self-righteousnesse, and shall be joyned to God in the fellowship of his Church, in the dayes of the New Testament. For as some passages in this Scripture were never fully accomplished at the returne from the captivitie of the seventie yeares, and namely this, that the children of *Israel* and *Judah* should returne both together: (for the ten tribes returned not

at all:) so many things that literally concerned the Jewes were types and figures, signifying the like things concerning the people of God in these latter dayes: In which respect sincere converts are called Jewes, *Rom.* 2. 29. and Israelites, *Gal.* 6. 16. *Joh.* 1. 47. and our Sacraments are made Antitypes of theirs, 1 *Cor.* 10. 1,2,3. and Rome is called Babylon, *Rev.* 17. 5. and Papists are called Gentiles, *Rev.* 11. 2. and therefore the captivitie of Babylon might well be a Type of the spirituall captivitie of Gods people to Antichristian bondage, and their returne from Babylon to Sion, a type of the returne of Christians from Romish slavery to the true Sion, the Christian Church. And this may be added further, that this place seemes not onely to be meant of the private or personall conversion of this or that particular Christian, but also further, of the open and joynt calling of a company, because it is said, they shall come, the children of *Israel* and the children of *Judah* together, and that their saying shall not be, *Let me joyne, &c.* but in the Plurall number, *Let us joyne our selves unto the Lord.* so noting the joyning of a company together in holy Covenant with God.

Concerning which Covenant with God, it will not be amisse for the better understanding of that which followes; first, briefly to shew how diversly Covenant is taken in the Scripture, which sometimes imports generally any firme appointment or promise of God, when man doth not promise unto God any thing backe againe: Thus the preserving of *Noah* in the Arke, and of the world from being drowned any more by a floud; the interchangeable succession of day and night; the giving of the Priesthood unto *Phineas*; the setting forth of the Shew-bread every Sabbath before the Lord, and the giving of the heave-offering unto the Priests, are said to be done by a Covenant, or an everlasting Covenant of God, *Gen.* 6. 18 *&* 9. 9, 10, 11. *Jer.* 33. 20. *Num.* 25. 12, 13. *Levit.* 24. 8. *Num.* 18. 19. But sometimes Covenant is taken more strictly and properly, for an agreement which God doth make with men, when he promiseth some blessing unto men, and bindes them to performe some dutie backe againe to him. Taken thus it hath two parts: first, a promise or stipulation of some blessing on Gods part: secondly, Restipulation or promise, or binding of man unto dutie back againe on his part: both these are in those words of the Covenant, *I will be to thee a God, thou shalt be to me a people:* and so *Gen.* 17. 1. & *v.* 7, 8, 9, 10. The Covenant

venant taken thus is either the Covenant of workes, or the Covenant of grace: And againe the Covenant may be considered, first as it is personall, private and particular, between God and one particular soule, making Covenant with God, and God with him, either at his first conversion, or at other times; of which we reade 2 *Sam.* 23 5. & *Psal.* 119. 106. & 66. 13, 14. & 27 8. & *Psal.* 119. 7, 8 Secondly, it is generall and publick of a company joyntly together, of which this Text *Jer.* 50. 5. seemes most properly to speake: as also that *Deut.* 29. 9, 10, &c. and that *Exod.* 19. 5, 6, and many others: A Covenant taken thus generally when it respects spirituall blessings, and spirituall duties, in the Communion of Saints, is that which is called Church-covenant, which Church-Covenant differs not in substance of the things promised from that which is between the Lord and every particular soule, but onely in some other respects; as first, the one is of one Christian in particular, the other of a company joyntly together. Secondly, if right Order be observed, a man ought not to enter into Church-Covenant, till he be in Covenant with God before, in respect of his personall estate. Thirdly, The one is usually done in private, as in a mans Closet between the Lord and his soule, and the other in some publick assembly. Fourthly, The one in these dayes is of such duties as the Gospel requires of every Christian as a Christian, the other of such duties as the Gospel requires of every Church and the members thereof.

Now concerning Church-Covenant, two things are to be noted for the better understanding thereof: first, the description of it: secondly, the use of it, and the benefit and fruit thereof. For the former it may be thus described, *viz.* "*A solemne and publick promise before the Lord, whereby a company of Christians, called by the power and mercy of God to fellowship with Christ, and by his providence to live together, and by his grace to cleave together in the unitie of faith, and brotherly love, and desirous to partake together in all the holy Ordinances of God, doe in confidence of his gracious acceptance in Christ, binde themselves to the Lord, and one to another, to walke together by the assistance of his Spirit, in all such wayes of holy worship in him, and of edification one towards another, as the Gospel of Christ requireth of every Christian Church, and the members thereof.*"

In this description, there are comprised six things: First, the generall name of the thing: [*a solemne and publick promise*] a promise

miſe it is, and therefore it is called, a joyning in Covenant here: an entring into Covenant, *Deut.* 29. 10. Solemne and publick, and therefore it is by the children of *Iſrael* and the children of *Judah* together: and they ſay, *let us joyne*. Secondly, The object [*the Lord, and one another*] *joyne our ſelves to the Lord*, it is not a promiſe onely to man, but to the Lord himſelfe, and likewiſe to one another; for, *come let us joyne*, implyes mutuall conſent together. Thirdly, The Agents or the qualification of the perſons: [*Chriſtians*] not Turkes, Indians, &c. Saints, *Pſal.* 50. 5. 16, 17. [*called to fellowſhip with Chriſt*] ſo 1 *Cor.* 1. 9. elſe if they be not united to Chriſt by faith, they are not fit materialls for ſuch a building as a Church of God, which is the houſe of the living God, *Epheſ.* 1. 1. 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. *Phil.* 1. 1. *Rev.* 21. 27. [*By his providence to live together*] elſe they cannot partake in the Lords Ordinances together as Churches ought to doe, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23. *Act.* 14. 27. the whole Church comes together in one place [*cleaving together in faith and love*] ſo *Act.* 4. 32. If they differ, namely, in opinion, or in their affection, and ſhould joyne in this Covenant, breaches, factions, rents, and ſchiſmes, would be like to be the iſſue of ſuch joyning: things ſo unlike would not cloſe nor long hold together, *Dan.* 2. 43 [*Deſirous to partake in all Ordinances*] this ſhould be the ground of their joyning in Covenant together, *Pſal.* 110. 3. willing: and not pride, nor gaine, nor the like: Fourthly, The Act [*binde themſelves*] that now they are bound by their owne word and promiſe, that they may ſay now, as *Pſal.* 56. 12. *Thy vowes are upon me*, or as *Num.* 30. 2. if he binde his ſoule with a vow. Fiftly, The matter promiſed; [*To walke together in all ſuch wayes of worſhip and mutuall edification, as the Goſpel requireth of Churches and Church-members*] they binde not themſelves to obſerve any deviſes of their owne, nor inventions of men, but ſuch things as the word of God requireth; neither is it perfect obedience to the Law, for that were impoſſible to performe, and preſumption to promiſe; nor is it onely in generall the duties of the Goſpel, but ſpecially ſuch duties of worſhip to God, & edification of one another as concerne Church-State, which now they enter into. Sixtly, The manner of performing [*Confidence of Gods gracious acceptance and aſſiſtance through Chriſt*] for in all our wayes God muſt be acknowledged, *Pro.* 3. 6. and much more in ſuch ſpeciall matters of weight: If men in entring into this Covenant looke for acceptance, through any worth

of

of their owne, or promise dutie in their own strength, they shew themselves like to the Pharisees, *Luk.* 18. 10, 11. and turne the Church-Covenant into a Covenant of workes: and as many as are of the workes of the Law, are under the curse, *Gal.* 3. 10.

The use and benefit of this Church-Covenant, and the fruit thereof, may be seene in two particulars; first, That this is that whereby a company of Christians doe become a Church: It is the Constituting forme of a Church. Secondly, This is that by taking hold whereof a particular person becomes a member of a Church, which was constituted afore. For the former of these; every Christian Church must have in it both matter and forme, and as the matter by Gods appointment are visible Saints, or visible beleevers, *Ephes.* 1. 1. 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. and in the New Testament, onely so many as may meete together in one Congregation: So the forme is a uniting, or combining, or knitting of those Saints together into one visible body, by the band of this holy Covenant. Some union or band there must be amongst them, whereby they come to stand in a new relation to God, and one towards another, other then they were in before: or els they are not yet a Church, though they be fit materialls for a Church; even as soule and body are not a man, unlesse they be united; nor stones and timber an house, till they be compacted and conjoyned.

Now that a company becomes a Church, by joyning in Covenant, may be made good sundry wayes; first, By plaine Texts of Scripture; as from *Deut.* 29. 1, 10, 11, 12, 13. *Yee stand this day all you before the Lord your God, your Captaines of your Tribes, your Elders, your Officers, with all the men of Israel*, ver. 10. *That thou shouldest enter into Covenant with the Lord thy God*, ver. 12. *and he may establish thee for a people unto himselfe*, ver. 13. So that here is plainly shewed, that here was a company, *ver.* 10. and this company were to be established to be a people unto the Lord, that is to say, a Church, *ver.* 13. And this is done by the peoples entring into solemne Covenant with God, *ver.* 12. And therefore a company of people doe become a Church by entring into Covenant with God.

"*This Covenant was not like our Church-Covenants, for it was of all* *Object.* 1
"*the Nation together; whereas the Church-Covenant with us, is of some*
"*select persons, leaving out others.*

1. This Objection concerns the matter of a Church, but the Covenant is not the materiall cause of a Church, but the formall *Answer.*

cauſe thereof: and for this the Text is plaine and expreſſe, that by entring into Covenant with God, a people come to be the Lords people, that is to ſay, his Church.

2. If it was of all the people together, the reaſon was becauſe that Church was a nationall Church: now if a nationall Church becomes a Church by entring into ſolemne Covenant with God, then a Congregationall Church becomes a Church by the ſame means; for there is no difference between them in this point.

3. Though it was of all the people, we may not ſay it proves that when we looke at the materiall cauſe of a Church, there may be a promiſcuous taking in of all Commers without diſtinction or ſeparation of the precious from the vile; for, firſt, when God took in this Nation to be his people, he ſeparated them from all the Nations of the earth beſides: ſo that there was a diſtinction and ſeparationof ſome from others. Secondly, this generation was generally a generation of beleevers; for it was they that were to enter into the land within a while after; for they were fortie yeares in the Wilderneſſe & this Covenant was made in the laſt moneth ſave one of the laſt of thoſe fortie yeares, *Deut.*1.3. And their carkaſſes fell not in the Wilderneſſe through unbeliefe, as their Fathers did, *Num* 14. *Heb.*3. but entred by faith, and when they were entred, ſubdued Kingdomes by their faith, *Heb.*11.33. and ſerved the Lord all the dayes of *Joſhua*, and of the Elders that outlived *Joſhua*, Joſh. 24 31. As for that which is ſaid of them, *ver.*4,5. of this Chap. that the Lord had not given them eyes to ſee, &c. that proves not that they were wholly hardned in a carnall eſtate, but onely that they were dull and ſlow of heart to conſider of ſundry diſpenſations of God towards them; for as much is ſaid of the diſciples of Chriſt, *Mar.* 8. 17, 18. when doubtleſſe they were not meere carnall or naturall perſons.

Object. 2 "*This people* Deut. 29. *could not become the Lords people by entring* "*into ſolemne Covenant with God, for they were the Lords Church and people already before this.*

Anſwer. 1. If they were, yet that was by entring into ſolemne Covenant with God on Mount *Sinai*, when the Lord had brought them up out of the Land of *Ægypt*; for then they entred into ſolemne Covenant with God, and God with them, and ſo they became the Lords peculiar people, *Exod.*19 4,5,6,8. *&c.* If they were his people before that, yet that alſo was by Covenant made with them in

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the loynes of *Abraham*, when God tooke him and his ſeede to be his Church and people, yet ſeparating *Iſhmael* from *Iſaac* and *Eſau* from *Jacob*, that the inheritance of the Covenant of God, and of being the Church of God, might reſt in the houſe of *Jacob*.

2. Yet it was not without great reaſon that the Lord ſhould now eſtabliſh them by ſolemne Covenant to be a people to himſelfe, becauſe the Nation had been much degenerated from the ſpirit and wayes of *Abraham* in *Ægypt*, and had broken that Covenant by their Idolatries there, *Ezek.* 20. 7. 8. And the Covenant made in *Sinai* or *Horeb* when they were come out of *Ægypt*, they had alſo broken by their Idolatries in the Wilderneſſe, *Ezek.* 20. 13, 16. for which cauſes, and the like, the Lord conſumed that generation, that they never entred into the Land, *Joſh.* 5. 4, 6. And therefore now when their poſteritie and children were ready to enter in, the Lord entred into Covenant with them, and thereby eſtabliſhed them to be his people, their Fathers being cut off for breaking the Covenant. But ſtill it was by Covenant that both Fathers firſt, and children afterward became a Church and people unto God; and when this generation were entred into the Land, their Covenant made before between God and them, was confirmed by Circumciſion, *Joſh.* 5. 3. 7. they being not Circumciſed before.

"*But this Covenant was of the whole Church with God, and therefore* Object. 3
"*not like our Church-Covenants, which are between the Church and the*
"*members, concerning watchfulneſſe over one another, and the like.*

Our Church-Covenants are with the Lord himſelfe, as was *Answer.* ſhewed before in the deſcription thereof. For watchfulneſſe and duties of edification one towards another, are but branches of the Lords Covenant, being duties commanded by the Law: and ſo it was with that people of *Iſrael*, who when they promiſed and Covenanted to walke in all the wayes of God; in all his ſtatutes and commandements and judgements, they promiſed theſe duties of love and watchfulneſſe and edification one towards another, becauſe theſe were duties commanded and required of God, *Lev.* 19. 17 *Deut.* 29. 18. the neglect whereof in the matter of *Achan* was the ſinne of all the Congregation, and brought judgement upon them all, *Joſh.* 7. 11, 12. Yea by this Covenant they were bound to duties towards them that were not then preſent, but children afterward to be borne, and proſelytes, that afterward ſhould be added

ded to them, *ver.* 14, 15. Like as our Church-Covenants are with them that now are, and that hereafter shall become members of the same Church. When *Jehojada* made a Covenant between the King and the people, 2 *King.* 11. 17. that Covenant was but a branch of the Lords Covenant with them all, both King and people: for the King promised but to Rule the people righteously, according to the will of God: and the people to be subject to the King so Ruling. Now these duties of the King to them, and of them to the King, were such as God required in his Covenant, both of him and them: and so it is in Church-Covenant, the duties of the Church to the members, and the members to the Church, and one another, are no other but such as the Gospel and the Covenant of grace requireth both of the Church and the members of it in their severall places.

Object. 4 "*But this place of* Deut. 29. *is not sufficient to prove a Church-Cove-*
"*nant in these dayes: because it is in the Scriptures of the old Testament,*
"*for whatsoever must be used in the dayes of the New Testament, must be*
"*proved from the Scriptures of the New Testament, or else it is to be*
"*layd aside.*

Answer. 1. The Church-Covenant may be proved from the New Testament also. as will afterwards appeare.

2. But suppose there were not pregnant places for it in the New Testament, yet it is not enough to prove the same unlawfull: for whatsoever Ordinance of the old Testament is not repealed in the New Testament, as peculiar to the Jewish Pædagogie, but was of morall and perpetuall equitie, the same bindes us in these dayes, and is to be accounted the revealed will of God in all ages, though it be not particularly and expressely mentioned in the writings of the New Testament, else how shall we prove it unlawfull for a man to marry his Sister, or his Aunt? How shall we prove it warrantable and necessary for Magistrates to punish Sabbath-breaking, blasphemy, and Idolatry? How shall we prove it lawfull to apply the seale of Gods Covenant unto Infants? or to admit women to eate of the holy things; for the Scriptures of the New Testament doe speake little in these cases; onely the Scriptures of the Old Testament doe give direction, and light about them, *Lev.* 18. *&* 19. *Neh.* 13. 15. *&c.* 2 *Chron.* 15. 16. *&* 2 *King.* 23. *Gen.* 17. 2. *&* *Exod.* 12. 4. 6. And the New Testament hath nothing to the contrary, and they are all according to morall equitie and reason,

and

and therefore they are to be obſerved from the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, as the revealed will of God, though there were nothing expreſſely for them in the New. And the ſame we ſay of the particular in hand. For, that a company ſhould be combined together into one body, in way of Government and ſubjection, by way of mutuall free Covenant; as men doe when they enter into Church Eſtate, nothing is more naturall or agreeable to morall equitie; nay, it implyeth a contradiction in the very name of libertie or freedome, that free-men ſhould take upon them authoritie or power over free men without their free conſent, and voluntary and mutuall Covenant or Engagement. And therefore ſeeing this Covenant is not repealed in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, the Scriptures of the Old are ſufficient warrant for it.

Another Scripture to prove the ſame, is *Deut.* 26. 16, 17, 18. with *Deut.* 27. 9. *This day the Lord hath commanded thee to doe theſe Statutes and Judgements, thou ſhalt therefore keepe and doe them, &c. Thou haſt avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walke in his wayes, and to keepe his Statutes, &c. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people; Take heed and hearken, O Iſrael, this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God.* This Scripture plainly ſhewes theſe things: 1. That here was the making of a Covenant between God and man; for that avouching of God to them, and them to God, was the making of Covenant, *ver.* 17, 18. 2. This was not of one perſon, but of a company together, the whole people of *Iſrael*, 26. 18. & 27. 9. 3 Here is the effect of this Covenant, that thereby they become the Lords people, *ver.* 9. So that when a company doe enter into holy Covenant with God, they become thereby the Lords people, that is to ſay, his Church. So *Ezech.* 16. 8. proves the ſame likewiſe: *I entred into Covenant with thee, ſaith the Lord, and thou becameſt mine.* Here alſo is the making of Covenant between the Lord and men; and this Covenant was not perſonall, but of a company; for it was with Hieruſalem, *ver.* 2. which was a whole Citie; it was with them that were multiplied as the bud of the feild, *ver.* 7. and it was with them that did proſper into a kingdome, *ver.* 13. and therefore not meant onely of any one particular perſon: And by this Covenant they became the Lords; that is, the Lords Church and people; for it is expreſly ſaid, *I entred into Covenant with thee, and thou becameſt mine.* So that when a company enter into Covenant with God, and God with

them, they become thereby the Lords Church and people. Likewise *Ezek.* 20. 37. *I will cause you to passe under the rod; and I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant.* In which place, there is first mention of an holy Covenant. Secondly, This was not of one person, but of a company, the whole house of Israel, *ver.* 30. 39. Thirdly, And this Covenant is called a *Bond*, because it is by Covenant that a people are bound, and tyed, and knit together, as one Church, all of them unto the Lord, and one unto another, So that the Covenant is the bond of union, by which a company are so combined and united, as that they become a Church. It is also observable, how the Lord before he would bring them into this bond of the Covenant, he would *cause them to passe under the rod*; by which phrase, as *Junius* upon the place well observes, is meant tryall and probation; drawne from the manner of Shepheards or owners of Cattell, who went among their sheepe, or other cattell with a rod, and therewith pointed out such as were for the Lords holy use, as *Lev.* 27. 32. And so hereby is noted that God would not in the dayes of the Gospel have men to be brought into his Church hand over head, but he would first cause them to passe under the rod of due tryall and probation; and then such as upon tryall were found to be holy for God, or meete matter for his Church, should solemnly enter into Covenant with God, and that Covenant should be the bond that should combine them, and knit them together into one, that so they that were many particular persons, should all become one body, that is to say, a Church.

And so much of the first Argument drawne from plaine Texts of Scripture.

Argu. 2. A second Argument may be taken from the Titles that are given to the Church; as first, that the Church is said to be married or espoused unto Christ, *Jer.* 2. 2. & 3. 14. 2 *Cor.* 11. 2. From whence the Argument may be formed thus: If every Church becomes a Church by being married or espoused unto Christ, then a company becomes a Church by way of Covenant: But the former is true, therefore the latter is true also.

The Assumption, that a Church becomes a Church by being married unto Christ, is plaine from the former Scriptures, where the Church of *Israel*, and the Church of *Corinth*, in regard of their entring into Church Estate, are said to be espoused and married unto Christ, as a loving and chast Virgine to one husband. Which

spirituall

ſpirituall marriage between Chriſt and his Church, is alſo taught in the type of the marriage between King *Salomon* and *Pharoahs* daughter, *Pſal.* 45.

The Conſequence of the Propoſition is plaine in reaſon; for there is no marriage but by way of Covenant; no woman becomes a mans wife, but by way of beſtowing her ſelfe in Covenant upon ſuch a man: neither doth a man become an husband, but by the ſame means; and therefore the Scripture ſpeaking of the violation of marriage, calls it a violation of Covenant, *Prov.* 2. 17.

" *Chriſt hath but one wife or Spouſe,* Cant. 6 9. *Object.* 1.

The Catholique Church indeed is but one; *viz.* the whole company of Gods Elect in heaven, in earth, dead, now living, and not yet borne: But as there is the Church-Catholique, which is but one; ſo there are particular and viſible Churches, which are in number many; and therefore the Scripture ſpeakes of Churches, 2 *Cor.* 8. 1. 19. *Gal.* 1. 2. Of the Churches of the Gentiles, *Rom.* 16. 4. Of ſeven Churches, *Rev.* 1. 4. Of all Churches, 1 *Cor.* 14 33. & 7. 17. *Rev.* 2. 23. *Answer.*

" *But if every particular Church be the Wife of Chriſt, how many hun-* *Obj.* 2.
" *dred Wives ſhould he have?*

1. If the Church of Iſrael, *Jer.* 2 2. the Church of *Corinth*, 2 *Cor.* 11. 2. The Jewiſh Church, *Rev.* 19. 7. be the Spouſe and wife of Chriſt, there is no reaſon but others ſhould be the ſame alſo, eſpecially ſeeing there is no particular Church, but in reſpect of their Church eſtate, they may decline and goe a whoring from Chriſt, and that ſhews that they were firſt eſpouſed to him; for no woman can be ſaid to goe a whoring from a man, if ſhee were never married, nor eſpouſed to him at all. *Answ.*

2. This that ſeemes an abſurditie, and were a ſinfull practiſe among men, in reſpect of Chriſt, is a certaine truth, and no diſhonour unto him at all, to have more Spouſes then one upon earth, many ſpirituall Spouſes. Men cannot give themſelves wholly and intirely to many as Chriſt can. Every faithfull ſoule is eſpouſed and married unto Chriſt; and in that reſpect he hath not onely many hundred but many thouſand, yea many millions of ſpirituall Spouſes.

" *But this ſpirituall marriage is between Chriſt and the Church, But* *Obj.* 3.
" *the Church-Covenant is between the Church and the members, and*
" *therefore this marriage doth not prove the Church-Covenant.*

Answer. 1. In some sort there may be said to be a marriage between the Church and the members, *viz.* in respect of that deare love and affection, that ought to be between them; and therefore it is said, *As a young man marrieth a Virgine, so shall the children of the Church be married to the Church*, Isa. 62. 5.

2. But properly the marriage is between Christ & the Church, and so is the Covenant also, so farre as therein they give up themselves to Christ as unto an head and Lord; as a woman in the Covenant of marriage doth give up her selfe unto her husband; And the performance of such duties as the Church and the member owe one unto another, is a branch of that marriage-Covenant, wherein they are tyed to Christ; for Christ himselfe in his Covenant requires, not onely that they should give up themselves to him, but also that they should performe these duties one unto another. And accordingly it is said of the Churches in *Macedonia*, that *they gave up themselves first to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God*, 2 Cor. 8. 5. True it is, they doe also binde themselves by Covenant one unto another, but in that respect the Covenant is properly a brotherly Covenant; like that 1 *Sam.* 20. 8. *Amos* 1. 9. because there the engagement is to one another as brethren, fellow-members, and fellow-helpers, and not as to one head or Lord, as it is in respect of Christ, and therefore in that respect it is not so properly a marriage-Covenant as it is in respect of Christ: though duties to one another are promised in their Covenant with one another, and also in their Covenant with Christ. In briefe thus: They promise unto Christ duties to him, and duties to one another according to him: and so their Covenant is a marriage-Covenant with Christ: They promise also to one another, duties to one another, and so it is a brotherly Covenant.

Another Title given to the Church (which also proves that a Church is made by Covenant) is the Title of a Citie, or Citie of God, *Psal.* 87. 3. & 48. 1. 8. & 122. 3. *Ephes.* 2. 19. The Argument lyeth thus: If a true Church be a Citie of God, then a Church becomes a Church by Covenant: But every true Church is a Citie of God. *Ergo.*

The Assumption is proved by the Scriptures forealledged. The Consequence of the Proposition is plaine in reason, for every Citie is united by some Covenant among themselves, the Citizens are received into *jus Civitatis*, or right of Citie priviledges, by some

Covenant

Covenant or Oath; And therefore it is so likewise in this Citie of God the Church; and men become Citizens of the Church by solemne Covenant.

The third Argument may be drawne from the meanes of reforming and restoring a Church when it is corrupted, which is by entring into Covenant a new with God, 2 *Chron.* 15.10. & 29.10. & *Neh.* 9 38. & 10.28, 29 *Jer.* 50 4, 5. The reason may be taken thus: If a Church decayed is to be restored and reformed by renuing Covenant with God, then it was instituted and erected at the first by way of Covenant: The reason of which Consequence is, because abuses and corruptions are to be reformed by bringing things back to the first Institution: Thus Christ reformes the abuses of marriage, by bringing them to the first Institution of that Ordinance; *From the beginning it was not so*, Mat. 19 8. And thus *Paul* reformeth the Abuses of the Lords Supper, by telling them what was the first Institution thereof, 1 *Cor.* 11.23 &c. And thus the Lord Jesus calling on the declining Church of *Ephesus* for reformation, *bids her remember from whence shee is fallen, and repent and doe her first workes.* Rev. 2.5. *Argu.* 3.

Now the Assumption is plaine from the Texts above alledged, that at the reforming of a Church, there is to be a renuing of Covenant; and thence it follows, that at the first erecting of a Church, there was the making of a Covenant with God, for els this renuing of Covenant would not have been the way to reforme it.

The fourth Argument is taken from that which doth dissolve a Church, which is the dissolving or breaking of the Covenant, *Zach.* 11.9,10,14. If dissolving the Covenant be that which doth dissolve the Church, then the making of Covenant is that which constitutes a Church. The reason of the Consequence is plaine, because otherwise the Covenant might be dissolved & the Church stand still, if it were not the making of the Covenant that did constitute the Church: But if dissipating stones in a building doe dissolve the house, then the compacting and conjoyning of them is that which makes the house; If separation of soule and body be that which destroyes the man, that then we say he is not: it must needs be the uniting of them, that did constitute & make the man: and so it is in this case. And that dissolving the Covenant is that which dissolves a Church, is plaine from the Text alledged, *Zach.* 11, where the breaking of the two staves, of beautie and *Argu.* 4.

bands, that is, the unchurching of the Jewes, is interpreted to be the breaking of the Covenant that God had made with that people, and the brotherhood that was between *Judah* and *Israel*.

Argu. 5. The fifth Argument is taken from the distinction which God hath appointed amongst Churches, and the confounding of all Churches into one, if there be not this Covenant to distinguish them. If Churches be distinct Societies, and may not be confounded, then Churches are compacted and combined by Covenant: But the former is true. *Ergo*.

That Churches are distinct Societies, is plaine in the Scripture, where we have mention of many Churches in one Countrey or Province, *Gal.* 1. 1. 1 *Thes.* 2. 14. Of seven Churches in Asia, *Rev.* 1. 4. and of all the Churches, 1 *Cor.* 14. 33. *Rev.* 2. 23. *Ephesus* is not *Smyrna*, nor *Smyrna* is not *Thyatira*, nor either of them *Pergamus*, but each one distinct of themselves, having Officers of their owne, which did not belong to others: vertues of their owne for which others are not praised, corruptions of their owne, for which others are not blamed; If it were not thus, then when *Laodicea* is condemned for lukewarmenesse, or *Ephesus* for declining, all the rest should be reproved also: And when *Philadelfia* is praised, all the rest should be praised also, which we see is otherwise. Now from hence the Consequence is certaine, that therefore they are combined by some Covenant each one amongst themselves; for there is nothing els without this that wil sufficiently distinguish them. The Spirit of God and Faith in their hearts, is common to all Christians under heaven, and in heaven also, and therefore this is not the thing that makes distinction. Nor is it habitation in the same Towne together, for that may be common to such Christians as are not of this Church, and usually is to many that are no Christians. As it is with Companies in *London*; as the Company of Goldsmiths, &c. that many others dwell in the same Towne with them, yea it may be in the same streete that are not of their Company: and therefore it is not meerely habitation that doth distinguish them from others, but some combination and agreement amongst themselves; So it is not habitation in the same Towne that distinguisheth Churches, and Church-members from other men, but their mutuall agreement and combination and joyning themselves together in an holy Covenant with God.

Object. "*If the Spirit of God and Faith in their hearts cannot distinguish one* "*Church from another, because these are common to them all, then how* "*can Covenant distinguish them, sith all Churches are joyned by Cove-* "*nant one as well as another?*

Answer. It is not a Covenant simply or a Covenant in generall that doth constitute a Church, or distinguish one Church from another, but a Covenant with application and appropriation to these persons. Even as it is in marriage, though all married couples be united by Covenant, and a Covenant wherein one couple promiseth the same duties that another couple doth, yet a Covenant with application and appropriation of the duties covenanted to this man and this woman in particular, such a Covenant is the very thing that make a couple, man and wife together, and gives them mutuall power over each other, as husband and wife, and puts a distinction between them and all other men and women in the world. And so it is in this case; a Covenant to performe Church-duties with application and appropriation to such persons, is the very thing that constitutes a Church, and distinguisheth one Church from another.

And thus much concerning the former of the two particulars, to shew the use of Church-Covenant, *viz.* that it is that whereby a company doe become a Church.

The second particular is this, that taking hold of the Covenant, or joyning in it, is that which makes a particular person a member of a Church. And this followes upon the former, and that may be the first Argument to prove it.

Argu. 1. If joyning in Covenant be that which makes a company to become a Church, then taking hold of that Covenant is requisite to make a particular person become a member of the Church: But the first is true, as hath been shewed before; Therefore the second is true also: If compacting and conjoyning of stones and pieces of Timber, be that that makes an house, then a particular stone cannot become a part of that house, till it be compacted and conjoyned to the rest: But the former is true, even in the Church of God, which is the spirituall Spouse and Citie of God, living stones, Christians, beleevers must be compacted together, and builded up together, *Ephes.* 2. 21. 22. *Psal.* 122 3. and therefore the latter is true also, that a particular Christian becomes a member of the Church, a part of that building by being combined with the rest.

Argu. 2. A second Argument may be drawne from the Scripture, *Isa.* 56. 3, 6, 7. *Let not the sonne of the stranger, that hath joyned himselfe to the Lord, speake, saying, the Lord hath utterly separated me from his people, &c. The sonnes of the strangers that joyne themselves to the Lord, to serve him, &c. and take hold of my Covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountaine, and make them joyfull in my house of Prayer, &c.* Concerning which Scripture, note three things to the present purpose. First, That these strangers were members of Christ, true beleevers, joyned to God by Faith; for it is said, *they have joyned themselves to the Lord*, v. 3 & v. 6. that they loved the name of the Lord, served him, and kept his Sabbaths, *v.* 6. and yet for all this they were not as yet joyned as members of the visible Church, for if they had been joyned, there would have been no cause for such a complaint, *the Lord hath separated me from his people*, v. 3. Besides, bringing them into the Church as members, and granting them the priviledge of members, is promised as a reward and blessing upon this their joyning to the Lord by faith and obedience, *v.* 7. And therefore it is not the same, but a distinct thing from it; the one being promised as a reward and blessing upon the other. Secondly, The Lord promiseth that he will make them members of his Church: *Them will I bring to my holy mountaine, and make them joyfull in my house of Prayer.* Thirdly, That among other things requisite to make them members, this was one, *viz.* the taking hold of that Covenant which was between the Church of *Israel* and God, *v.* 6. So that hence we may gather, that men may be members of Christ, joyned to the Lord by faith and love, and yet for the present not be members of the visible Church: And that when God is so gracious to true beleevers, as to make them members of his visible Church, it is requisite that they joyne in Covenant before.

Object. "*But might not faith in Christ, beleeving in heart on the God of Is-*
"*rael, be all the taking hold of the Covenant that is here meant.*

Answer. Not so, but over and above that, here is also meant their open profession of their Faith in the God of *Israel*, and open binding of themselves by Covenant to all such duties of faith and obedience, as God required of the Church of *Israel*, and the members thereof. Now distinctly take the Answer to this Objection in three or foure particular Propositions. First, There was a Covenant between the Church of *Israel* and God, *Exod.* 19. 5, 6, 7, 8. *Ezek.* 16. 8. *Deut.* 29. 10. *&c.* Secondly, This Covenant was mutuall; not onely

onely a promiſe on Gods part to be their God, and to take them for his people, but alſo reciprocally on their part to give up themſelves unto God to be his people, and to doe the dutie of people to their God; The Covenant is not meerely to receive from God, and promiſe nothing back againe to him; nor doth God binde himſelfe therein, and leave men at libertie, but it is mutuall on both parts, as theſe Scriptures declare; *Gen.* 17. 1. *Exod.* 19 7, 8. *Deut.* 5. 27. & 26. 16, 17. *Hoſ.* 2. 23. & *Zach.* 13. 9. Thirdly, Hereupon it followes, that if men had not promiſed, and alſo performed, in ſome meaſure of truth, the duties of Faith and obedience unto God, they had not taken hold of the Covenant, but had diſcovenanted themſelves, notwithſtanding all the promiſes of God unto their Fathers or others. Thus though God promiſed *Abraham* to be a God to him, and to his ſeede in their generations, *Gen.* 17. 7. yet the *Iſhmaelites* and *Edomites* deſcending from *Abraham*, were diſcovenanted by not promiſing nor performing thoſe duties of Faith and obedience, which God required on the peoples part: when a Covenant containes promiſes on Gods part, and duties alſo on mans, he doth not take hold of the Covenant that takes one part, and leaves another. Fourthly, To beleeve what God promiſed in the Covenant for his part, and to promiſe in a private way the duties of obedience on mans part, was not ſufficient to make theſe ſtrangers members of the Church, but they muſt doe it openly and in the view of the Church, elſe the Church could have had no warrant to have admitted ſuch into their Fellowſhip, if their faith and obedience had not been viſibly profeſſed, *Exod.* 12. 43. 48 2 *Chron.* 23. 19.

And in as much as the Covenant was mutuall, when theſe ſtrangers did manifeſt their taking hold of the Covenant, they manifeſted and profeſſed both Faith and obedience, both that they beleeved what God promiſed, and that they would be obedient to what he required; If any ſhould have claimed Church-fellowſhip, ſaying, I beleeve the promiſes, but would not binde himſelfe to any duties of Evangelicall obedience, this had been a taking hold of the Covenant by the halves, a taking of one part of it in ſeeming and pretence, and a leaving of another; but it would not have been ſufficient to have brought a man into the fellowſhip of the church: Such of the Congregation of *Iſrael* as would not come to *Hieruſalem* to enter into Covenant, were to be ſeparated from the Church

in the dayes of *Ezra*, *Ezra* 10. 8. And therefore such as being strangers should refuse to enter into it, could not be admitted into the Church; So that the taking hold of Gods Covenant, which is there required to make these strangers members of the Church, is a beleeving in heart on the God of *Israel*, and an open profession that they did beleeve, and likewise a promise of obedience or subjection unto the God of *Israel*, and an open professing of such obedience and subjection; and that is the joyning in Covenant which we stand for, before a man can be a member of a Church, even an open profession of Faith and of Obedience.

*Argu.*3. A third Argument is taken from those Scriptures which shew that men become members by being added to the Church, or being joyned to them, *Act.* 2. 47. *&* 5. 13. *&* 9. 26. If men become members of the Church by being added or joyned, then joyning in Covenant (or professing of subjection to the Gospel or Covenant of God) is that whereby a man becomes a member of a Church: But the former is true, as appeares by the Scriptures forementioned, and therefore the latter is true also.

But all the doubt in this Argument will be concerning the consequence of the *Major* Proposition; but that may be made good by this reason, and the confirmation of it, *viz.* that a man cannot be added or joyned to the Church by any other meanes without this joyning in Covenant. The truth of which Assertion will appeare by shewing the insufficiency of all other means, without this joyning in Covenant, and that may be done in Answer to the Objections ensuing.

*Object.*1. "*When men were added to the Church, it may be, no more is meant*
"*but that God did convert them and worke Faith in their hearts, and that*
"*converting of them was the adding of them to the Church.*

Answer. This cannot be all; for, first, *Saul* was converted and had faith wrought in his heart, and yet he was not at the first received for a member of the Church at *Hierusalem* (though he assayed to be joyned unto them,) till they were better satisfied in his spirituall estate by the testimony of *Barnabas*, Act. 9. 26, 27, 28. And those strangers, *Isa.* 56. (as was said before) were joyned to the Lord by being converted, and having Faith wrought in their hearts, and yet they doe lament it with griefe, that they were not joyned as members to the visible Church: *The Lord hath separated me from his people*, say they, *ver.* 3. The old saying is true concerning the visible

visible Church, *There are many wolves within, and many sheepe without.* Secondly, Those that were joyned were beleevers before they joyned; for it is said, *divers were added,* ver. 14. Thirdly, Those that were added to the Church, were added and joyned to them by such an act as others durst not put forth, *Act.* 5. 13. *Of the rest durst no man joyne unto them,* and therefore it was not by the irresistable act of God in converting of them, but by some voluntary act of their owne choice and consent; for Gods converting grace depends not upon mans daring, or not daring to receive it. If to be joyned be no more but to be converted, then when it is said, *Some durst not be joyned,* the meaning should be, they durst not be converted, nor suffer Faith to be wrought in them; which is grosse Arminianisme, suspending the converting grace of God upon the free will of the creature. Fourthly, And as this joyning which others durst not doe, cannot be meant of being converted; So if it be well considered, what the thing was wherein they durst not joyne, it may appeare that it was nothing els but this, that they durst not agree, and engage themselves to be of their body and societie; that is, they durst not joyne in Covenant with them. For it cannot be meant of dwelling in the Towne with them, for this they both durst doe and did: nor is it onely of joyning to heare the Word in their assembly, for this also they durst doe, and many did it in great multitudes, so that many by hearing the Word became beleevers, and were added to the Lord both of men and women, *ver.* 14. at this very time when it is said of some they durst not joyne unto them: Nor is it of joyning to them in affection, or approbation of their way, for this they also durst doe and did expresse so much in magnifying and commending them, when yet they durst not joyne unto them, *ver.* 13. Which magnifying of them doth imply that they heard their doctrine, and saw their practise, and approved it, and highly commended them for the same: Wherefore seeing this joyning, which some durst not doe, cannot be meant of being converted, nor of joyning in habitation, nor of joyning in affection, nor in hearing the Word in their Assembly, nor of approbation, and expressions that way, it remaineth that it must be meant of joyning in that neere relation of Church-fellowship amongst them, so as to be engaged by voluntary consent and agreement to be members of their Church. Fiftly, If joyning to the Church, were no more but to be con-

verted, then he that were converted were joyned as a member of every visible Church throughout the world, which were a great confusion of that Order, and distinction of Churches, which the Lord hath appointed.

Obj. 2. "*Men may be joyned to the Church, in heartie affection and love, and* "*yet without any Covenant.*

Answ. True, but this will not make them members of that Church, for then *Saul* was a member of the Church at *Hierusalem*, afore he was joyned a member, for he was joyned to them in heartie affection afore, and therefore assayed to joyne as a member; and so were they that durst not joyne, *Act.* 5. 13. yea then a man should be a member of many Churches, yea of all Christian Churches in the world; for he is to love them, and beare heartie affection to them all; The true members of the Churches in *England* are united in heartie affection, to the Churches in *Scotland*, in *Holland*, in *Fraunce*, in *New-England*, &c. And yet they are not members of all these Churches, nor subject to their censures as members are.

Obj. 3. "*But the reason of that is because they doe not dwell among them in* "*the same Towne.*

Answer. Neither would habitation with them in the same Towne, make a man a member of the Church there, if there be no more then so. Suppose *Saul* to have dwelt in the same house afore his conversion in which he dwelt after, which is not unpossible nor unlikely; yet we see he was no member of the Church at *Hierusalem*, afore his conversion, no nor of some time after, though he might have dwelt in an house in the midst of the Christians, and Church-members there. The members of the *Dutch* and *French* Churches in *London*, or other Townes in *England*, are not members of the *English*-Congregations or Churches, no more then the *English* are of theirs, and yet they dwell promiscuously together in the same Streete of the same Towne. Towne-dwelling would not make a man a free-man of a Company in *London*, or some other Corporation; for many others dwell in the Towne with them; yea it may be in the same streete, that are not free of their Company, and so it is in this case.

Object. 4. "*But the reason why such as dwell in Towne with the Church, are* "*not members thereof, may be, because they frequent not their Assem-* "*blies.*

Idiots

Idiots and Infidells might come into the publick meetings among the *Corinthians*, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23, 24, 25. yet Idiots and Infidells were not therefore members of the Church. And *Saul* after his converſion might have come in among the Church in time of publick duties, and have ſeene and heard all that they had done: yet this would not have made him of one body with them. Some *Indians*, *Moores*, and other naturall perſons come into our meetings in *New-England*, ſome of their owne accord, and others by the Command or Counſell of their Maſters and Governours, yet no man can ſay, that all theſe are hereby made Church-members. Wherefore ſeeing neither converſion, nor loving affection, nor cohabitation, nor coming into their meetings, doth joyne a man as a member of the viſible Church (for ſome men have all theſe, and yet are not members, and others are ſometimes members of the viſible Churches, and yet want ſome of theſe, are hypocrites and want ſound converſion) it remaineth therefore that as ſound converſion makes a man fit matter for a Church; So profeſſion of his Faith, and of his ſubjection to the Goſpel, and the Churches approbation, and acceptance of him (which is the ſumme of Church-Covenant) is the formall cauſe that gives him the being of a member. *Answ.*

"*But joyning doth not alway ſignifie joyning in Covenant; Philip joyned to the Eunnuchs chariote, and duſt to mens feete*, Act. 8. 29. & Luke 10, 11. *and yet there was no Covenant, and therefore men may joyne to the Church without any Covenant.* *Object.* 5.

The word indeed may expreſſe any cloſe joyning, whether naturall, (as the branch is joyned to the Vine, or an arme or other member to the body) or artificiall, as when two ſtickes were joyned to become one in *Ezekiels* hand, *Ezek.* 37. Or when Carpenters or Maſons doe joyne pieces of ſtone or Timber together, to make one houſe, *Neh.* 4. 6. *Ezr.* 4. 12. but is not onely the force of the word that is ſtood upon. But when joyning is uſed to expreſſe ſuch joyning, wherein a man voluntarily takes on him a new relation, there it alwayes implyes a Covenant, whether the relation be morall and civill, or religious and Eccleſiaſticall: We ſpeake of voluntary relation, for there are naturall relations, as betweene parents and children: and theſe need no Covenant, there is no Covenant to make a man a Parent, or a childe; There are alſo violent relations, as between Conquerour and Captives, and *Answ.*

in these there is no Covenant neither; but others are voluntary, and these alwayes imply a Covenant, and are founded therein, whether they be morall and civill (as between husband and wife, *Pro.* 2. 17. between Master and servants, *Luk.* 15. 15. between Prince and subject, between Partners in Trade, 2 *Chro.* 20. 35, 36, 37. where the Covenant or agreement is, that men shall bare such a share of charges, and receive such a share of profits:) or religious, as between Minister and people, between the Church and the members: all these are done by way of Covenant. A man cannot joyne himselfe to a woman as her husband, but by way of Covenant: A man cannot joyne himselfe to another as a servant, or apprentise, but by way of Covenant; And so may we say of all the rest; nor into any body corporate, but by the same way and means. If men be united into a body politick or incorporate, a man cannot be said to be joyned to them by meere heartie affection, unlesse withall he joynes himselfe unto them by some Contract or Covenant. Now of this nature is every particular Church, a body incorporate, 1 *Cor.* 12. 27. *Yee are the body of Christ, &c.* and hath power to cast out, 1 *Cor.* 5. 13. and to forgive and receive in Penitents, 2 *Cor.* 2. 7. 8 as a body incorporate; and therefore he that will joyne unto them, must doe it by way of Covenant or Agreement; and so this Answer to this Objection, may be a fourth Argument to prove the point in hand, that joyning in Covenant is that which makes a man, a member of a Church.

Argu. 4. All voluntary relations, all relations which are neither naturall nor violent, are entred into by way of Covenant.

But he that joynes into a Church as a member, or enters into a Church, doth take upon him such a relation; Therefore joyning to a Church as a member, is by way of Covenant.

Argu. 5. A fifth Argument may be drawne from the power which all Churches, Officers and members, have over all their members in the Lord. If all Churches, Officers, and members, have power in the Lord over all their members, then joyning in Covenant is necessary to make a man a member of a Church, but the former is true, therefore the latter is true also.

The Assumption in this Argument, that all Churches have power over their members, is proved from 1 *Cor.* 5. 4, 5. 13. where the Apostle reproveth the *Corinthians* for suffering the Incestuous

ceſtuous man amongſt them, and commands them to deliver him to Satan, and caſt him out from amongſt them. Now this he would not have done, if they had had no power over him, or if there had been any roome for them to ſay, wee have nothing to doe with him, wee have no power over him. And the ſame is prooved in other Scriptures alſo; as, *Mat.* 18. 17. *Pſal.* 149. 6. 7, 8, 9.

And the Conſequence of the *Major* Propoſition, *viz.* that then members doe engage themſelves by Covenant, is proved by this reaſon; That Churches have no power over ſuch as have not engaged themſelves by Covenant, and committed power unto them, by profeſſing to be ſubject to all the Ordinances of Chriſt amongſt them.

The truth whereof may appeare by two Reaſons:

Firſt, Becauſe all Chriſtians have power and right, *jure divino*, to chooſe their owne Officers to whom they commit their ſoules, *Act.* 6. & 1. & 14. 23. where the word χειροτονησαντες, imports chooſing by Election: and ſo the word is uſed and tranſlated, 2 *Cor.* 8. 19. *he was choſen by the Churches, &c.* It is not miniſteriall gifts that makes a man a Miniſter to every Church, nor inveſteth him with ſpirituall power over them, nor though he dwell amongſt them, unleſſe they call him, and he accept of that call: And as they have power to chooſe their Officers, ſo likewiſe to chooſe their brethren according to God, *Rom.* 14. 1. Now if they have power to chooſe their Officers and brethren, then none can have power over them as Officers and brethren, without their owne conſent, and whom they never choſe, nor promiſed by any Covenant or Engagement to be ſubject to the Lord.

Secondly, If the Church ſhould exerciſe any Act of Church-power over ſuch a man as never entred into Covenant with them (ſuppoſe to Excommunicate him for whoredome or drunkenneſſe, or the like) the man might proteſt againſt their Act, and their Sentence, as *Coram non judice*, and they could not juſtifie their proceedings, if indeed there have paſſed no Covenant or Engagement between him and them. If he ſhall ſay, you have nothing to doe to paſſe Sentence or Cenſure upon me, I am none of your Church, but of another Church; Suppoſe in *Holland*, in *France*, *&c.* and I am onely here now for Merchandiſe ſake, or upon ſome other occaſion: what ſhall they ſay to ſtop his mouth, if there never

ver passed any Covenant between him and them.

Object. "*But Ministers have power over the people by the word of God,* "Heb. 13. 17. 1 Thes. 5. 12. 1 Tim. 5. 17. *and not by mens engaging* "*themselves by Covenant.*

Answer. But what is it that makes men Ministers to such a people, Officers to such a Church, or maketh them sheepe of my flocke? Is it not those Scriptures that makes every man a Pastour, or Teacher, or Ruler to a people, unlesse they call him to that Office; and then in so doing they Covenant and Engage themselves to be subject to him in the Lord, and then those Scriptures take hold on them. One might as well say, it is not the Covenanting of a wife to her husband that gives him power over her, but the Word of God; For as the Word of God commands people to obey their Ministers, so it commands *wives to be subject to their husbands*, Ephes. 5. 22. And yet all men know, a man cannot take this woman for his wife but by Covenant. So that if shee once makes her selfe a wife by her owne voluntary Covenant, then the word of God takes hold on her, and bindes her to doe the duties of a wife: but if shee hath made no Covenant, the man hath no power over her as her husband, neither is shee his wife; So if men once make themselves members of such a Church, sheepe of such a mans flocke, by their own voluntary Covenant, then the word of God takes hold of them, and bindes them to doe the duties of members to their fellow-brethren, and of people to their Pastours or Ministers. But if they never chose such a man to be their Minister, nor Covenanted to be subject to him in the Lord, he then can have no power over them as a Minister unto them, because they have right to chose their owne Ministers.

Argu. 6. A sixth Argument may be taken from the distinction that is between members, and not members. If there be by the word of God a distinction, between members of the Church and such as are no members, then joyning in Covenant is necessary to the being of a member; but the former is true, as appeares 1 *Cor.* 5. 12. Some are within, and may be judged by the Church, and others are without, and may not: and therefore the latter is true also. And the reason of the Consequence is because there is nothing else without this joyning in Covenant, that can sufficiently distinguish them; It is not Faith and Grace in their hearts, for some men are members of the visible Church, and yet have no Grace,

Grace, and others may have Grace, and yet be no members, and therefore this is not the thing that doth distinguish them, nor is it affection, nor cohabitation, nor every approbation of the Word of God, and the wayes of his Church, nor comming into their Assemblies to heare the Word; But these things were touched before, and therefore may be here the more briefly passed over.

And so much shall suffice to have spoken of the second particular, concerning the use of Church-Covenant, that it is by joyning therein that a particular person becomes a member of a Church.

But here it will be needfull to remove sundry Objections, which may seeme to some to be of great weight against Church-Covenant, that so by the removing of them, the truth may be the more cleared, to fuller satisfaction, if it be the will of God.

Object.1. "*Church-Covenant is a Terme that is not found in Scripture.*

Answer. First, So is Sacrament, Trinitie, &c. and yet those termes may be lawfully used, because the thing meant thereby is found.

Secondly, But seeing the Covenant is between the Lord and his Church, as the two parties that are confederate, it is all one whether it be called the Lords Covenant, or the Church-Covenant: As when *Mamre*, *Aver*, & *Eschol* were confederate with *Abraham*, Gen. 14. 13. might not one truely say, *Abraham* was confederate with them? Relatives doe mutually put and establish one another.

Thirdly, The Scripture allowes both the Lords Covenant with the Church, *Eze.* 16. 8. & the peoples covenant or Saints covenant, or Churches Covenant with him, *Deut.* 29. 12. *Psal.* 50. 5. *Jer.* 50. 5.

Fourthly, There is good reason for both the words; both the Lords Covenant, and the Church-Covenant, because both are confederate; And for that of Church-Covenant, there is this reason also, *viz.* to distinguish it from other Covenants, as a marriage-Covenant, *Pro.* 2. 17. and a brotherly Covenant, 1 *Sam.* 20. 8. The Church-Covenant being thus called not onely because they are a Church, or members thereof that make it, but also because they enter into it in reference to Church-Estate and Church-duties: The duties which they bind themselves unto in this Covenant being such especially as concern a Church and the members thereof.

Object.2. "*But this Church-Covenant puts some disparagement upon the Covenant of Grace, which every beleever is already entred into with God, and seeme to charge the same with insufficiency; for every second Covenant doth argue that the first was not faultlesse*, Heb. 8. 7.

Answ. 1. A second Covenant doth argue that the first was not faultlesse, where the Covenants are contrary one to another, as the covenant of Grace, and the covenant of works are, and so it is most true, that the bringing in of the free Covenant of Grace did argue that righteousnes and life could not be attained by the Law, or Covenant of works; for if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousnesse should have been by the Law. *Gal.* 3. 21. *Rom.* 8. 3.

2. But if it be the same Covenant that is renewed or made againe, though upon a new occasion, no man can say that entring into the same the second time, or a third, or a fourth, doth disanull the first, or cast disparagement upon the same. The covenant of works given to *Adam* was not blamed or faulted, because it was renewed in *Sinai* The Covenant of Grace was first given to *Adam* in Paradise after his fall, afterward to *Abraham*, then to the people of Israel under types and shadows; And againe after the coming of Christ in the flesh; yet none of these doth disanull the former, or argue the same to be faulty; and the reason is, because it is still the same Covenant though renewed upon new occasions; and in some particulars in some other manner. And the like we say concerning Church-Covenant, or the Covenant which a man makes when he enters into the Church, *viz.* that it is not another Covenant contrary to the Covenant of Grace, which every beleever is brought into at his first conversion, but an open profession of a mans subjection to that very Covenant, specially in the things which concerne Church estate, into which estate the man is now entring.

Obj. 3. "*It is not lawfull to make such a Covenant as the Church-Covenant,* "*because it is not in our power to keep it, and we do not know whether* "*God will give us power.*

Answ. This ground is very true, that no man hath power of himselfe to any thing that good is, but all a mans power and ability must come of God through Christ, 2. *Cor.* 3. 5. *Phil.* 2. 13. *Joh.* 15. 5. But the inference is not good, that therefore it should be unlawfull to ento into Church Covenant: for 1 By the same reason, all promises are unlawfull, and all covenants whatsoever; as the covenant of marriage, the covenant of service, yea and the personall covenant of Grace, when a particular soule promiseth faith and new obedience; for there is none of these, no not the covenant of Marriage,

Marriage, which a man is able of himself to keep, as the adultery of *David* and *Bathsheba*, among others, doth plainly prove.

2. God hath promised to give power to them that in self-deniall seek it of him, and trust to his promise for it. *Ezek.* 36. 27. *Jer.* 31. 33. *Rom.* 6. 14. *Jer.* 32. 40. The true inference therefore from this ground, from mans disabilitie to performe were this, that therefore a man should not enter into Church-Covenant in his owne strength, for that was *Peters* fault in promising not to deny Christ, but to die with him rather: but Church-Covenant, as also all other promises, should be entred into, in an humble looking up to Christ Jesus for help and assistance to performe. *Thou therefore my sonne, be strong in the grace that is in* Christ Jesus, 2. *Tim.* 2. 1.

"*God disalloweth covenants of mans making (and so our Church-* *Obj.* 4.
"*Covenant) in those words, But not by thy Covenant.* Ezek. 16. 61.

God doth not reprove them there for making Covenant, for *Answ.* then he were contrary to himselfe, who elsewhere called them to do it, *Exod.* 29. *Deut.* 29. and commended them for it, *Psal.* 50. 5. Yea and in that very place of *Ezek.* 16. acknowledgeth a Covenant betweene him and them, *ver.* 60. 62. But the meaning is, he would do them good, but not for their good keeping the Covenant of works, for they had very sinfully broken it, *ver.* 59. but even as he saith elsewhere, not for their sakes, or for their righteousnesse, *Ezek.* 36. 32 *Deut.* 9. 4, 5, 6. But what force is there in this arguing, *viz.* If God will do us good, but not for our good keeping the covenant of works, then it is not lawfull to promise obedience to the covenant of Grace, in such things as concerne Church estate; All men may easily see that here is a plaine *non sequitur.*

"*This entring into Covenant may keep out many good men from joyn-* *Obj.* 5.
"*ing to the Churches, because they are not satisfied about it: and therefore*
"*it is better laid aside.*

It is not impossible, but good men may for a time be unsatisfied *Answ.* about it, till they understand the nature and use of it, and yet the thing be warrantable enough for all that in the sight of God; the Tribes were troubled at the Altar set up upon the banks of Jordan by the two Tribes and an halfe, till they understood the intent and use of it, and for what purpose it was erected: and then they were satisfied. *Josh.* 22. And the same may be said of *Peters* eating with the Gentiles, which at the first was very offensive to them of the

circumcision, till they understood what *Peter* had to say for his defence therein, and then they rested well satisfied, *Act.* 11.

But if men understand what the Church-Covenant is, there is no reason that good men should be troubled at it; it being nothing else but a promise of obedience unto the Gospel of Christ, or of such duties as the Gospel requireth of all Christians in Church-estate: For, will good men refuse to obey the Gospel, or submit to the ordinances of Christ? or will they refuse to professe and promise so much? If a man understand what it is, and what we meane by it, and yet refuse to enter into it when he hath opportunitie thereto, such refusing is no part of his goodnesse, but is to be reckoned amongst his corruptions; It is ignorance at the best, and if not so, then it may be perversenesse of will, or some want of will to performe obedience to the Gospel. And surely there is smal hope that such would yeeld subjection and obedience to the Gospel, who do refuse to professe or promise it.

Obj. 6. "*But the Scripture*, Act. 2. 41. *tels of joyning to the Church with-*
"*out any Covenant. For it was not possible that* 3000 *should enter into*
"*covenant in one day.*

Answ. Two things may be said in Answer to this Objection.

First, that 3000. were not so many, but that joyning in Covenant might easily be done by them all, in one day. For, 1. it was at Penticost, at which time of the yeer the dayes were at the longest: And, 2. the Scripture tels us, that *David* made a Covenant with all the Tribes of Israel in one day, 2. *Sam.* 5 1, 2, 3. The Articles of the covenant betweene *David* and the Tribes, and so betweene this 3000. and the Lord might be openly declared, and they both the one and the other might by some signe or other, expresse their consent thereunto in one day.

Secondly, as joyning in Covenant is a thing that might be done, so it is more then probable that indeed it was done, by those 3000. soules. For it is said, *ver.* 41. *that they gladly received the Word*, that is, they openly professed that they did with all their hearts receive it, for this receiving of the Word is noted as a condition, upon which they were admitted to baptisme, and therefore it was not onely an inward receiving of it in their hearts, but also an open professing that they did receive it; for an inward receiving of it in their hearts, without an open professing thereof outwardly, would not have been sufficient for the admitting of them unto Baptisme.

Now

Now this Word which they received was an exhortation to Repentance for ſinne, and to Faith in the promiſe, *ver.* 38 39. and to obedience in ſevering themſelves from others, and ſaving themſelves from that untoward generation, *ver.* 40. And therefore when they openly profeſſed, that they gladly received this word, there was an open profeſſing of their Repentance for ſinne, *ver.* 40. of their Faith in the promiſe, and of obedience to the Commandement, which is nothing elſe, but the very ſumme of Church-Covenant: yea, and further, their very preparation to this repentance, faith and obedience, in that true compunction and ſorrow of ſoul, was alſo openly made manifeſt, *ver.* 37.

"*But yet there would not be ſuch long narrations, of every one ſeve-* *Reply.*
"*rally as now are uſed, when men do enter into Church-Covenant, when*
"*each one makes a good long ſpeech, in the profeſſion of his Faith and Re-*
"*pentance.*

When the thing is certaine, as was ſhewed before, that they did *Anſw.* openly profeſſe repentance, faith and obedience, it is not difference in the length or largeneſſe of their ſpecches in expreſſing of themſelves, that can make any difference in the thing: *Majus & minus non diverſificant ſpeciem.* And we denie not but they might be briefer, becauſe there was not ſuch need they ſhould be long in regard of ſome difference betweene them and us, their time and ours: Firſt there were the Apoſtles preſent to heare their confeſſions, and to judge thereof, who were men of very good diſcerning, and therefore briefer expreſſing of mens ſelves might ſuffice; whereas the beſt Chriſtians, yea the beſt Miniſters amongſt us are not to be compared to the Apoſtles; and therefore as we need more time for ſtudy, and for preparation for our Sermons then they did: ſo likewiſe we need more time to heare, and try the ſoundneſſe of mens repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Yet this we may adde withall, that if the Apoſtles and thoſe primative Chriſtians, men of ſuch excellent diſcerning were ſometimes deceived, and could not alwayes ſo diſcern, but that ſome Hypocrites would creep into the Church: as the example of *Ananias* and *Saphira* doth witneſſe; how much more need is there, that the Churches of God in theſe dayes (being far inferiour to them) ſhould be very watchfull and circumſpect in

trying the ſpirituall eſtates of them that offer to come into the Church?

Secondly, their times alſo differed from ours: for their Chriſtianitie was a matter of reproach and danger of excommunication, *Joh.* 9. 22. of impriſonment, *Act.* 4. 3. and 5. 18. and the like. And therefore to ſee men now to make open profeſſion of their faith in Chriſt Jeſus, whoſe ſervants and diſciples were ſo hated, and who himſelfe but a while before was crucified, this was not an ordinarie matter: and therefore in words, men might be the briefer when they came to be received into the Church: But our times in *New England* do not perſecute Chriſt, and Chriſtians, and Chriſtian Churches, but countenance them, and protect them; and therefore there is more need now to be more ſtudious in examination of mens eſtates when they offer themſelves for Church members: when the Jews were in favour, many of the people of the Land became Jews, *Eſth.* 8. 17.

Obj. 7. "*But why is there ſo little proofe of this Church-Covenant in the New* "*Teſtament?*

Anſw. 1. Suppoſe the New Teſtament ſaid nothing of it, yet it might have ground ſufficient from the Scriptures of the old Teſtament; for if it was Gods revealed will in thoſe dayes, that a companie ſhould become a Church, and particular perſons become members of that Church by way of Covenant, we may be ſure it is ſo now likewiſe, unleſſe covenanting were peculiar to the Jewiſh Pædigogie; indeed if it had never been uſed in thoſe times, but were ſome new ordinance, peculiar to the dayes of the New Teſtament, in ſuch caſes alſo a ground from the Scriptures of the New Teſtament were neceſſarie, as there is in all ſuch things wherein there is any change or variation, from what was uſed in thoſe times afore Chriſt; as that there ſhould not be Nationall Churches, but congregationall, and not one viſible Church, but many, that there ſhould be baptiſme, and the Lords Supper: theſe are matters that are not found in the old Teſtament, nor were appointed to be uſed in thoſe dayes, and therefore we muſt have warrant for them in the New, and ſo we have. But for the Covenant it is otherwiſe, it is no new ordinance peculiar to the dayes of the Goſpel, nor any Leviticall ordinance peculiar to the Jewiſh Pedigogie; and therefore the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament that give warrant for it, may be ſufficient as hath been ſhewed afore.

2. And

2. And yet there is not wanting good warrant for it, that it ought to be used, in the dayes of the New Testament. For, 1. the Prophets do foretell it, *Isa.* 56. 6, 7. and 44.5. and *Jer.* 50.5. *Ezek.* 20. 37. and in sundrie other places, to omit the rest at this time, because some of them have been spoken of before; Onely let those words of *Isa.* 44. 5. be well considered, and see if they do not plainly hold forth that in the dayes of the New Testament, men should openly professe their faith, and solemnly bind themselves by Covenant, to be the Lords people, one shall say, I am the Lords, and another shall call himself by the name of *Jacob*, and another shall subscribe with his hand, and firname himself by the name of *Israel*. These words are so plaine for open professing of faith in the Lord, and open binding of mens selves by Covenant unto him, as we conceive nothing need be more.

2. The Apostles do sufficiently testifie, that such a thing was practised in their dayes, else how should we understand that fellowship in the Gospel in its full latitude and breadth, *Phil.* 1.5. if this combining into Church fellowship be no part thereof; yea when it is said, *they continued stedfastly*, or as the word ἦσαν συνεστραμμένοι, may well be translated, *they strongly did cleave together*, or hold together in such a Fellowship, which was not preaching and hearing the doctrine of the Apostles, nor Sacraments, nor Prayer, but a thing distinct from all these. If this combining themselves into a spirituall fellowship and societie of Church-state be no part thereof, we know not how to understand it, nor what that fellowship should meane; If Doctrine, and Sacraments, and Prayer had not been particularly mentioned, in the same place, it might have been thought that the Fellowship in which they so steadfastly clave together had been no more, but their coming together to observe these said ordinances, and their communion therein. But when all these are particularly mentioned, and Fellowship mentioned among them, as a thing distinct from the rest, we may not confound it with the rest. We might as well say, that by doctrine is meant Sacraments, and by Sacraments is meant Prayer; as to say that by Fellowship is meant nothing else but the exercise of doctrine, and Sacraments, and Prayer. And if these as they are distinctly named, be distinct ordinances, and may not be confounded, then Fellowship being named in the same manner imports something distinct from them all, and may not be confounded with

with them, nor with any of them, no more then the other may be confounded one with another. And if ſo, then as this Fellowſhip may import, the communion of their gift and goods one for the helpe of another, ſo it muſt firſt of all imply a combining of themſelves into Church-ſtate by mutuall agreement, conſent, or covenant.

Furthermore, when the Apoſtle writeth, that by experience of the *Corinthians* liberall contribution to the poore Saints, men glorified God for their profeſſed ſubjection to the Goſpel of Chriſt, 2. *Cor.* 9. 13. he plainly imployes thereby, that the *Corinthians* had made a profeſſion or promiſe of ſuch ſubjection to the Goſpel as did comprehend this particular of diſtributing to the neceſſitie of the Saints, among other things. And their liberall diſtribution which he there ſpeaks of, was looked at as one point of their reall performance of that ſubjection to the Goſpel, which they had before profeſſed, and promiſed. Now the Church-Covenant is nothing elſe, but the profeſſing or promiſing of ſuch ſubjection, and therefore this place is another proofe of Church-Covenant. Beſides, it hath been ſhewed afore in *Argument* 3. that thoſe places which ſpeake of being added to the Church, of joyning, or aſſaying to joyne unto the Church, *Act.* 2. 47. and 5 13. and 9. 26. are not expounded according to the full meaning of them, when they are underſtood of any other joyning, if joyning in Covenant be left out. And therefore the Scriptures of the New Teſtament do beare good witneſſe unto Church-Covenant, though, as we ſaid before, the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament might have been ſufficient if the New Teſtament had ſpoken nothing of it.

Obj. 8. "*But Baptiſme makes men members of the viſible Church, and therefore the Covenant is needleſſe.*

Anſw. This is anſwered in the Anſwer to the fourth of the 32. Queſtions, where it is ſhewed at large that Baptiſme is a ſeale of the Covenant betweene God and the Church, but neither makes the Church, nor members of the Church, nor alwayes ſo much as proves men to be members.

Obj. 9. "*This Church-Covenant is a late deviſe, and was not known in ancient time, and therefore is to be rejected.*

Anſw. Firſt, True Antiquitie is that of the Scriptures. Now ſith Church Covenant is warranted by the Scripture, as hath been ſhewed

shewed before in this discourse, it cannot be charged to want true Antiquitie. When the Papists are wont to charge the doctrine of Protestants with Novelty, and such as was never heard of before *Luther*, the Orthodoxe are wont to answer, that if the doctrine do not agree with the Scripture, then let it be condemned for Novelties; and if it do, it is warranted by the best Antiquitie, even the testimonie of God himself who is the Antient of dayes: Our Faith, saith Doctor *White*, is in all points the same that is contained in the Scripture, and so consequently of the same Antiquitie: and therefore all they that say it came up but of late, must first prove it contrary to the Word of God, or else hold their peace. *White, Way*, 44. 1. And the same we say in this particular of the Church-Covenant.

Secondly, And yet they that search the Stories and Writers of the times and ages next after the Apostles, may find some testimonie of Church-Covenant in those dayes: For instance, *Justine Martyr* in his Apol. 2. makes mention of three things which were required of all that were admitted into the Church as members, παλιγγενεσία, πίστις, ἡ ὑπόσχεσις, that is regeneration, and soundnesse in the Faith, and a promise to walke in obedience to the Gospel. And generally this was the practise of all those times, that never any man was admitted to Baptisme, nor his children neither, but they put him to answer three questions, *Abrenuntios?* whereto he answered, *Abrenuntio. Credis?* whereto his answer was, *Credo:* and *Spondes?* to which he answered, *Spondeo.* So that here was an open declaration of his Repentance from dead works, and of the soundnesse of his Faith, in the two first particulars, and an open binding himself by covenant or promise to walke according to the Gospel, in the third. But much needs not to be said in this point, unto them that do acknowledge Scripture Antiquitie to be sufficient, though after times should be found to swerve from the Rules and Patterns that are therein contained.

"*If Church-Covenant be so necessarie, then all the Reformed Churches* *Obj.* 10.
"*are to be condemned as no Churches; for they have no such Co-*
"*venant.*

They that have knowne those Churches, not onely by their *Answ.* writings, and confessions of their faith, in Synods and otherwise; but also by living amongst them, and being eye-witnesses of their Order, do report otherwise of them, *viz.* that they are combined

together by solemne Covenant with God and one another. *Zepperus*, speaking of the manner, used in the reformed Churches, in admitting the children of Church-members to the Lords Table, when they came to age, and have been sufficiently catechised, and instructed in the doctrine of Religion, tells us, that such children are admitted to the Lords table, by publick profession of Faith, and entring into Covenant. "*Consuetum est*, saith he, *ut qui per aetatem inque Doctrinâ Catecheticâ profectum ad sacram Cœnam primum admittuntur, fidei confessionem coram totâ Ecclesiâ publicè edant per parentes aut qui parentum loco sunt, jussu ministri, in Ecclesiæ conspectum producti: quòdque in illa confessione, per Dei gratiam perstare, ac, juxta illam, vitam instituere, insuper etiam disciplinæ Ecclesiasticæ ultrò ac sponte suâ subjicere sese velint, spondeant atque stipulentur, Polit. Eccles. lib. 1. cap. 14. p. 158.* that is, The manner is, "that they who by reason of age and proficiencie in the doctrine "of Catechisme are first admitted to the Lords Supper, should "publickly before the whole Church make confession of their "faith, being brought forth into the sight of the Church by their "parents, or them that are instead of parents, at the appoint"ment of the Minister; and likewise should promise and cove"nant by the grace of God to continue in that Faith which they "have confessed, and to lead their lives according to it; yea, and "moreover to subject themselves freely and willingly to the dis"cipline of the Church. These words we see are full and plaine, that children are not in those Churches received to the Lords Supper, without personall confession of Faith, and entring into Covenant before; And if they tooke this course with children come to age, there is as much reason, or more, that the same course should be holden with men of yeers, when they are admitted members. And so the same *Zepperus*, speaking of the consociation of Churches amongst themselves by mutuall confederation, hath these words, which as they may be applyed to the combining of many Churches, so may they be combining of many members of the same Church, "Κοινωνια illa τῶν ἁγίων, *quam in Symbolo profitemur nunc Apostolico, nihil aliud hic requirit, & vult, quam obligationem omnium Ecclesiæ membrorum & confœderationem, &c.* "that is, that communion of Saints which we professe in the "Creed, doth require and meane nothing else but an obligation "of all the members of the Church, and a binding of them to-

gether

"gether by Covenant. *Polit. Eccles. li.* 3 *c.* 8, *p.* 721.

To these testimonies of *Zepperus*, those words may be added of Mr. *Parker* our own countreyman, a man of singular note for learning and holinesse, who also himselfe lived sometimes beyond Sea in the reformed Churches, and there ended his dayes, so that we may safely give the more credit to his testimonie, he having so good meanes fully to know the state and order of those Churches. Now he speaketh of a "*Solennis forma absque quâ in* "*Ecclesiæ alicujus communionem nullus ritè recipitur*: of a solemne "forme, without which no man is rightly received into the com-"munion of the Church, hath these words. *Hic mos ille est refor-*"*matarum Ecclesiarum non solum in lapsis restituendis, sed in extraneis,* "*imò quibuscunque recipiendis qui ad habitandum alicubi considerit,* "*etsi fortè in Ecclesiâ illius loci quo ante commorabantur, juxta hanc* "*formam admissi prius fuerant. Examinat Presbyterium, plebs consen-*"*tit, quisque testes vitæ suæ secum adfert, vel testimonia saltem: pub-*"*licatur nomen cujusque competentis pro concione, admonetur quisque* "*si quid habeat quod excipiat, ut denunciet presbyteris. Si nihil contrà* "*adferatur, admittitur quidem, sed non nisi solerni pactione cum Deo* "*& cum Ecclesiâ. Spondet verò Ecclesiæ, se ambulaturum prout san-*"*ctam illam communionem decet; Disciplinæ illius Ecclesiæ subjacere* "*velle, se fratribus illius communionis invigilaturum juxta Christi præ-*"*ceptum, Matth* 18. 17. *ut præveniantur sanenturque scandala, &* "*illi ad studium bonorum operum provehantur.* That is, This is the "manner of the reformed Churches, not onely in restoring such "as have fallen, but in admitting of strangers, yea of all whosoever "they be, who do sit down in any place for habitation, though "perhaps they have been formerly admitted after the same man-"ner in the Church where they have formerly dwelt; The Pres-"bytery doth examine, the people do consent, every man brings "with him witnesses of his life, or at least-wise testimonies: The "name of each one that desires to be a member, is published in the "Assembly, every one is admonished if he have any exception "against the party, to bring it to the Presbytery. If nothing be "brought against him, then indeed he is admitted; but yet no "otherwise then by a solemne covenant with God and the "Church; And to the Church he promiseth that he will walk as "becometh that holy Fellowship, that he will be subject to the "discipline of that Church, that he will watch over the brethren

" of that Communion, according to the Command of Christ, " *Mat.* 18. 17. that offences may be prevented and healed, &c. " *Polit. Eccles. lib.* 3. *cap.* 16. § 4. *Pag.* 171, 172. Much more he hath to the same purpose in that place, alledging sundry Canons and Decrees of Synods of reformed Churches, wherein they have determined that none should be received into their Churches, but by this way of solemne Covenant. And others that have lived amongst them may have been eye-witnesses that this is their usuall practise.

Obj. 11. " *But what shall be said of the Congregations in* England, *if Churches* " *must be combined by Covenant? Doth not this doctrine blot out all* " *those Congregations out of the Catalogue of Churches? For what ever* " *Covenant may be found in the reformed Churches in other parts, yet it* " *is plaine that the* English *have none.*

Answ. Though we deny not but the Covenant in many of those Congregations is more implicite and not so plaine as were to be desired; (and what is amisse in them, in their materialls, or in want of explicite combining of pure matter, or in any of their wayes, wee will not take upon us to defend) yet we hope we may say of them " with Master *Parker, Polit. Eccles. lib.* 3. *cap.* 16. §. 1. *pag.* 167. " *Non abest ea realis & substantialis (quanquam magis quàm par erat* " *implicita) coitio in fœdus, eaque voluntaria professio fidei substantia-* " *lis: quâ (Deo gratia) essentiam Ecclesiæ idque visibilis hacusque* " *sartam tectam in Angliâ conservavit*; That is, there wants not that " reall and substantiall comming together, (or agreeing in Cove- " nant, though more implicate then were meete) and that sub- " stantiall profession of Faith, which (thanks be to God) hath " preserved the essence of visible Churches in *England* unto this " day.

The reasons why wee are loath to say, that the Congregations in *England* are utterly without a Covenant, are these:

First, Because there were many Christian Churches in *England* in the Apostles time, or within a while after, as Master *Fox* sheweth at large, *Act. & Mon. lib.* 2. beginning *pag.* 137. where he reporteth out of *Gildas*, that *England* received the Gospel in the time of *Tiberius* the Emperour, under whom Christ suffered, and that *Joseph* of *Arimathea* was sent of *Philip* the Apostle from *France* to *England* about the yeare of Christ, 63. and remained in *England* all his time, and so he with his fellowes layd the first foundation of

of Christian Faith among the Britaine people, and other Preachers and Teachers comming afterward, confirmed the same and increased it. Also the said Master *Fox* reporteth out of *Tertullian*, that the Gospel was dispearsed abroad by the sound of the Apostles into many Nations, and amongst the rest into *Britaine*, yea into the wildest places of *Britaine*, which the *Romans* could never attaine unto: and alledgeth also out of *Nicephorus*, that *Simon Zelotes* did spread the Gospel to the West Ocean, and brought the same into the Iles of *Britaine*: and sundry other proofes he there hath for the same point. Now if the Gospel and Christian Religion were brought into *England* in the Apostles times, and by their means, it is like that the *English* Churches were then constituted by way of Covenant, because that was the manner of constituting Churches in the Apostles time, as also in the times afore Christ, as hath been shewed from the Scripture before in this discourse. And if Christian Congregations in *England* were in those times combined by Covenant, then eternitie of Gods Covenant is such, that it is not the interposition of many corruptions that may arise in after times that can disanull the same, except when men wilfully breake Covenant and reject the offers of the Gospel through obstinacy, which we perswade our selves they are not come unto: and consequently the Covenant remaines which hath preserved the essence of Churches to this day; though the mixture of manifold corruptions, have made the Covenant more implicite then were meete.

Secondly, Because there want no good Records (as may be seene in *Seldens History of Tithes*) to prove that in former times in *England* it was free for men to pay their Tithes and Oblations where themselves pleased: Now this paying of Tithes was accounted as a dutie of people to their Minister, or sheepe to their Pastour: and therefore seeing this was by their owne voluntary agreement and consent, their joyning to the Church as members thereof, & to the Ministery thereof as sheepe of such a mans flock, was also by their owne voluntary agreement and consent: and this doth imply a Covenant. It was not the precincts of Parishes that did limit men in those dayes, but their owne choice.

Thirdly, Those Questions and Answers ministred at Baptisme, spoken of before, (viz. *Doest thou renounce? I doe renounce: doest thou beleeve? I doe beleeve: doest thou promise? I doe promise*) as they

were used in other places, so were they also in *England*, and are unto this day, though not without the mixture of sundry corruptions. Now this doth imply a Covenant. And when the children came to age, they were not to be admitted to the Lords Supper, before they had made personall Confession of their owne Faith, and ratified the Covenant which was made at their Baptisme by their Parents, which course indeed afterward did grow into a Sacrament of Confirmation, but that was an abuse of a good Order.

If here it be said, that the Members of the Parishionall Assemblies are not brought in by their owne voluntary profession, but by the Authority and Proclamation of the Prince, and therefore they have no such Covenant.

The Answer is, that the Christian Prince doth but his dutie when he doth not tollerate within his Dominions any open Idolatry, or the open worship of false Gods by baptized persons, but suppresseth the same: and likewise when he gives free libertie to the exercise of all the Ordinances of true Religion, according to the minde of Christ, with countenance also and encouragement unto all those whose hearts are willingly bent thereunto, *Ezra.* 1. 1 3 & 7. 13. And therefore this practise of his cannot overthrow the freenesse of mens joyning in Church-Communion, because one dutie cannot oppose nor contradict another. And suppose that this course of the Magistrate should seeme to be a forcing of some to come in for members who were unfit, (in which case it were not justifiable) yet this doth not hinder the voluntary subjection of others, who with all their hearts desired it. When the *Israelites* departed out of *Ægypt*, there went a mixed multitude with them many going with them that were not *Israelites* indeed, *Exod.* 12. And in the dayes of *Mordecay* and *Hesther*, many of the people of the lands became *Jewes*, when the *Jewes* were in favour and respect, *Est.* 8. 17 and so joyned to them not of their owne voluntary minde, nor of any sincere heart towards God, but meerely for the favour or feare of men; yet this forced or feined joyning of some could not hinder those that were *Israelites* indeed from being *Israelites*, nor make the *Jewes* to be no *Jewes*, no Church-members.

And the same may be said in this case, Suppose the Magistrates Proclamation should be a cause, or an occasion rather, of bringing some

ſome into the Church, who came not of their owne voluntary minde, but for feare, or for obteining favour, yet this cannot hinder, but others might voluntarily and freely Covenant to be ſubject to the Goſpel of Chriſt: Such ſubjection and the promiſe of it being the thing which themſelves did heartily deſire, though the Magiſtrate ſhould have ſaid nothing in it.

If any ſhall hereupon inferre, that if the Pariſhionall Aſſemblies be Churches, then the members of them may be admitted to Church priviledges in *New England*, before they joyne to our Churches: Such one may finde his Anſwer in the Anſwer to the tenth of the thirty-two Queſtions; Whereunto we doe referre the Reader for this point. Onely adding this, that this were contrary to the judgement and practiſe of the Reformed Churches, who doe not admit a man for member without perſonall profeſſion of his Faith, and joyning in Covenant, though he had formerly been a member of a Church in another place, as was ſhewed before out of Maſter *Parker*.

Laſtly, If any ſay, that if theſe reaſons prove the *Engliſh* Congregations to have ſuch a Covenant as proves them to be Churches, then why may not *Rome*, and the Aſſemblies of Papiſts goe for true Churches alſo? For ſome man may thinke that the ſame things may be ſaid for them that here in Anſwer to this eleventh Objection are ſaid for the Pariſhes in *England*: Such one muſt remember two things: firſt, that we doe not ſay ſimply, a Covenant makes a company a true Church, but (as was ſaid before) a Covenant to walke in ſuch wayes of worſhip to God and edification of one another, as the Goſpel of Chriſt requireth. For who doubts, but there may be an agreement among theeves, *Pro.* 1. A confederation among Gods enemies, *Pſal.* 83. A conſpiracy among the *Arabians*, the *Ammonites* and *Aſhdodites*, to hinder the building of *Hieruſalem*, Neh. 4. 7, 8. And yet none of theſe are made true Churches by ſuch kind of confederacies or agreements. And ſo wee may ſay of the Aſſemblies of Papiſts, eſpecially ſince the Counſell of *Trent*. If there be any agreement or confederacy among them, it is not to walke in the wayes of the Goſpell, but in wayes contrary to the fundamentall truths of the Goſpel, as Idolatry in worſhip, Hereſie in doctrine, and other Antichriſtian pollutions and corruptions: and therefore if they combined in theſe things, ſuch combinations will never prove them true Churches.

The

The Church is the Pillar and ground of truth, 1 *Tim.* 3. 15. But the Religion of Papists is so farre from truth, that whosoever liveth and beleeveth according to it, without repentance, cannot be saved. Witnesse their doctrine in the point of vilifying the Scriptures, and in point of free-will, and of Justification by works, of the Popes Supremacy, of the Sacrifice of the Masse, of worshipping of Images, &c. In regard of which, and such like, the Holy Ghost saith, that their Religion is a Sea, *become as the blood of a dead man, and every soule in that Sea dyeth*, Rev. 16. 3. And therefore agreement in such a Religion will never prove them to be true Churches; nor any Assemblies of Arrians, Antitrinitaries, Anabaptists, or Famelists, supposing them also to be combined by Covenant among themselves.

But now for the Assemblies in *England*, the case is farre otherwise; for the Doctrine of the Articles of Religion which they professe, and which they promise to hold and observe (though some things are amisse in some of those Articles, and though many persons live contrary in their lives) yet the doctrine is such that whosoever beleeveth, and liveth according to it, shall undoubtedly be saved, and many thousands have been saved therein; and therefore Assemblies united by Covenant to observe this doctrine may be true Churches, when the Assemblies of Papists and others may be false, although they also were combined by Covenant: the reason of the difference rising from the difference that is in the doctrine and Religion which they severally professe, and by Covenant binde themselves to observe, the one being fundamentally corrupt, and consequently pernicious: The other in the fundamentall points Orthodoxall and sound.

Secondly, It must be remembred also (which was intimated before) that if fundamentall corruptions be professed in with impenitency and obstinacy, then God may disanull the Covenant on his part, and give a Bill of divorce to such a people, *Jere.* 3. 8. Now experience and the Scripture also doth witnesse of the Jesuited and *Trent*-Papists, that they repented not of the workes of their hands, of worshipping Devills, and Idolls of Gold, &c. neither repented they of their murthers, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornications, nor of their thefts, *Rev.* 9. 20, 21.

But now for the Parish Assemblies in *England*, we hope that we may safely say, they doe not sinne of obstinacy, but of ignorance, having

having not been convinced (and many of them never having had means to be convinced) of the corruptions that are amongst them, in respect of their constitution, and worship, and Ministery, and so the Covenant remaining among them, may prove them to be Churches, when it cannot stand the Papists in like stead, they being impenitent and obstinate: Which we doe not speake to justifie the Parishes altogether, as if there were not dangerous corruptions found in them, nay rather (the Lord be mercifull to the sinnes of his people) wee may lament it with teares, that in respect of their members and Ministery, in respect of their worship and walkings, in many of those Assemblies there are found such apparent corruptions, as are justly grievous to a godly soule, that is enlightened to discerne them, and greatly displeasing to the Lord, and indeed had need to be repented of betime, least otherwise the Lord remove the Candlesticke and unchurch them, *Rev.* 2. 5. In a word, the corruptions remaining are just causes of repentance and humiliation: but yet in as much as the Articles of Religion, which they professe, containe such wholesome doctrine, that whosoever beleeveth and walketh according thereunto, in sinceritie, shall undoubtedly be saved, and in as much as the corruptions are not persisted in with obstinacy, therefore wee deny not but they have the truth of Churches remaining.

Obj. 12. "*But this opinion of Church-Covenant, is holden by none but the* "*Brownists, or those of the Separation, and therefore it is not to be re-* "*ceived.*

Answ. This ground cannot be made good, that none but they of the Separation are for Church-Covenant, for all the Reformed Churches generally, as was shewed before in Answer to Objection the tenth, are for it in their judgement & practise; and shall all they be condemned for *Brownists, or maintaining unlawfull Separation from the Church? Also Master *Parker* and Doctor *Ames*, men of our owne Nation, famous for holinesse and learning, and moderation, both of them plead for Church-Covenant, and yet neither of them were Brownists, but bare witnesse against that riged Separation. For Doctor *Ames*, his judgement of Church-Covenant may "be seene in his *Medulla, Theol. lib.* 1. *cap.* 32. § 14, 15, 17. *Fideles* "*non constituunt Ecclesiam particularem, quamvis simul forsan plures* "*in eodem loco conveniant aut vivant, nisi speciali vinculo inter se con-* "*junguntur, &c.* That is, beleevers doe not make a particular

*By Brownists and Separatists you are to understād those of the riged Separation.

F "Church,

" Church, though perhaps there be many of them that meete to-
" gether, and live in the ſame place, unleſſe they be joyned toge-
" ther by ſome ſpeciall bond amongſt themſelves: for ſo one
" Church would many times be diſſolved into many, and many
" Churches confounded into one. Now this bond is a Covenant,
" either expreſſed or implicite, whereby beleevers do binde them-
" ſelves particularly to performe all ſuch duties, both towards God
" and mutually to one another, as pertaine to the nature of a
" Church, and their edification. And thereupon no man is rightly
" admitted into the Church, but by confeſſion of his Faith, and
" ſtipulation, or promiſe of obedience.

Theſe words doe plainely and fully ſhew his judgement of Church-Covenant, to be the very ſame that is held and practiſed in *New-England* at this day. And that he was not for that ſeveritie and regiditie of ſeparation, may be cleared from ſundry of his workes, wherein he plainly and fully beares witneſſe againſt the ſame, and namely, in his *Freſh ſuite againſt Ceremonies*, *pag.* 207. and in his ſecond *Manuduction*, wherein he purpoſely and at large deales in this Argument of Separation. Sure it is Maſter *Canne* in his Booke, wherein he goes about to prove the neceſſitie of ſeparation from the Non-Conformiſts principles, doth profeſſedly and expreſſely oppoſe himſelfe againſt Doctor *Ames* in the point of Separation, which ſhewes how farre the good Doctor was from favouring that way, when they moſt zealouſly therein doe count him to be a ſpeciall oppoſite of theirs, as indeed he was. And for Maſter *Parker*, his judgement of Church-Covenant was heard before in part; where he ſo much approveth the practiſe of the Reformed Churches in this point. And much more may be ſeene of his judgement herein, in the ſixteenth Chap. of the third booke of his *Polit. Eccleſiaſtica*. And yet in the ſame place, and likewiſe *lib* 1. *cap.* 13. 14. of the ſame Treatiſe he plentifully and plainly ſhewes his diſlike of the wayes of Separation, as is alſo acknowledged in an Admonition to the Reader, prefixed before that Booke, by *I. R. ſuo, ſuorumque nomine*. So that this Aſſertion appeares to be untrue, wherein it is ſaid, that *none but Browniſts and Separatiſts doe approve of Church-Covenant*.

As for the Inference from this ground, that therefore Church-Covenant ſhould not be received, becauſe it is pleaded for and practiſed by the Separatiſts. We Anſwer, that this will not follow, unleſſe

unleſſe it could be proved, that the Separatiſts hold no truth; or if they hold a truth wee muſt not hold it, that ſo it may appeare wee differ from them; Either of which, it were unreaſonable to affirme. If the Papiſts hold ſundry Articles of Faith, as that there is a unitie of the Divine Eſſence, and Trinitie of Perſons, that Jeſus Chriſt is God and man, and that true Meſſiah that was promiſed, and the onely Saviour of the world, and many ſuch like, muſt wee deny theſe things becauſe they are holden by the Papiſts? This were as unreaſonable as to condemne the doctrine of the Reſurrection, becauſe it was maintained by the Phariſees, *Act.* 23. 8. And ſo we ſay of Church-Covenant, holden and practiſed by them of the Separation; as alſo many other truths are maintained by them: No reaſon that truth ſhould be refuſed, becauſe the Separatiſts maintaine it. When Doctor *Bancroft* in a Sermon at *Pauls*-Croſſe, had avouched that the Superioritie of Biſhops above other Miniſters, is by Gods owne Ordinance, and to make the contrary opinion odious, affirmed that *Aerius* perſiſting in it, was condemned for an Heretique by the generall conſent of the whole Church, and that *Martin* and his Companions, doe maintaine the ſame opinion of *Aerius*; What ſaith learned Doctor *Reinolds* hereunto, in a Letter to Sir *Francis Knolls*, who required him "to ſhew his judgement herein: Touching *Martin*, ſaith he, if "any man behave himſelfe otherwiſe then in diſcretion and cha-"ritie he ought, let the blame be laid where the fault is, and de-"fend him not; but if by the way he utter a truth, mingled with "whatſoever elſe, it is not reaſon that that which is of GOD "ſhould be condemned for that which is of man: no more then "the doctrine of the Reſurrection ſhould be reproved, becauſe "it was maintained and held by the Phariſees: Wherefore remo-"ving the odious name of *Martin* from that which is ſinceritie "and love, is to be dealt with, &c.

And the very ſame doe wee ſay to them that would make Church-Covenant to be odious, becauſe it is held by thoſe of the Seperation, who are commonly called Browniſts: If men behave themſelves otherwiſe then they ought, we defend them not therein, but if they hold any truth mingled with whatſoever elſe, wee would not have that which is of God to be condemned, for that which is of man: truth ſhould not be refuſed, becauſe of other corruptions that may be found in them that hold it.

Reply. "*If you with them hold Church-Covenant, you iuſtifie them in all* "*their Wayes of ſeperation and erronious opinions.*

Anſw. Not ſo, for many of them hold that there are no viſible Chriſtians that ſtand members of the Pariſhes in England, and that it is not lawfull to hold any private Religious communion with ſuch perſons; and that the pariſhionall Aſſemblies are none of them true Churches, and that it is not lawfull to hear any of thoſe Miniſters to preach the Word, none of which are juſtified at all by holding Church-Covenant, though they do hold the ſame; There is no ſuch neceſſarie and inſeparable connexion betweene theſe opinions, and that of Church-Covenant, that he that holds this, muſt needs hold the other alſo.

Obje. 13. "*But the time hath been, when your ſelves did not hold Church-Co-* "*venant, as now you do; when you were in England you were not of this* "*mind, and therefore no marvell if your change ſince your coming to New* "*England be ſuſpected, and offenſive. If you change your judgement* "*and practiſe in this manner, God knows whether you may come at laſt,* "*and therefore men may well be afraid of holding with you in this point,* "*which your ſelves did not hold when you lived in your native Countrey.*

Anſw. Some of us when we were in *England*, through the mercie of God, did ſee the neceſſitie of Church-Covenant; and did alſo preach it to the people amongſt whom we miniſtred, though neither ſo ſoone nor ſo fully as were meete, for which we have cauſe to be humbled, and to judge our ſelves before the Lord.

But ſuppoſe we had never knowne nor practiſed the ſame before our coming into this countrey, yet if it be a truth of God, there is no reaſon why we ſhould ſhut our eyes againſt the light, when God holds it forth unto us, nor that others ſhould be offended at us for receiving the ſame. For by the ſame reaſon men might ſtill continue in their ſinnes, and not make any progreſſe in knowledge and holineſſe, that ſo they may not ſeeme unconſtant, which were contrary to the Scripture, wherein we are commanded nor to faſhion our ſelves according to the former luſts of our ignorance. 1. *Pet.* 1. 14. But to be changed, *Rom.* 12. 2. and renued, *Epheſ.* 4. 23. and put off the old man, and put on the new, *Epheſ.* 4. yea to grow in grace and holineſſe, 2. *Pet.* 3. 18. and be ſtronger and ſtronger, *Iob* 17. 9. that our good workes may be more at the laſt, then at the firſt, *Revel.* 2. 19. Sure it is, the Apoſtle tells the *Corinthians* and *Epheſians*, that the time had been when

when they were not the ſame men that now they are when he wrote unto them; and yet he doth not blame them for leaving their former opinions or practiſe, but commends them for it, 1. *Cor.* 6. 11. *Epheſ.* 2. 3. &c. And it is ſaid of *Apollos* an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scripture, that when he came to *Epheſus* the way of God was expounded unto him more perfectly by *Aquila* and *Priſcilla*, whereas before he was inſtructed in the way of the Lord, knowing onely the Baptiſme of *John*: yet this was no diſpraiſe at all to him, that now upon better information he would change his judgement to the better, nor unto them that were the means thereof: *Act.* 18. 25, 26. *Nullus pudor eſt ad meliura tranſire.*

The time hath been, (and we may be humbled for it) when we lived without God in the world, and ſome of us in many ſinfull courſes: and ſhall any be offended, becauſe we are not ſtill the ſame? and when God called us from the wayes of ſin and death, to the Fellowſhip of his grace in Chriſt; yet ſome of us lived a long time in conformity to the ceremonies impoſed in our native Countrey, and ſaw not the evill of them. But when God did open our eyes, and let us ſee the unlawfulneſſe thereof, we cannot ſee but it would have been a with-holding the truth in unrighteouſneſſe, and a great unthankfulneſſe to God for light revealed to us, if we ſhould ſtill have continued in that courſe through an inordinate deſire of ſeeming conſtant: and therefore it is not any juſt cauſe of offence that we have changed our judgement and practiſe in thoſe things, when we once perceived the Word of God to diſallow them.

Indeed it hath been ſometime objected againſt Mr. *Cartwright*, and others, that deſired the reformation of the Churches in *England*, in regard of Diſcipline and Church-Order, that they which ſtood ſo much for Reformation in Diſcipline, did in after times adde and alter ſome things, beyond what they ſaw at firſt, and what themſelves had formerly deſired; and that therefore being ſo mutable, and inconſtant in their apprehenſions, they were not to be regarded, nor hearkened unto: to which Objection Mr. *Parker* makes full Anſwer *in Eccleſ. lib.* 2. *ca.* 36. *p.* 307. where he ſheweth from the Scripture, and the teſtimonie of Biſhop *Jewel*, "Doctor *Reinolds*, and others, that in the Reformation of Reli-"gion God brings not his ſervants into perfection in knowledge "and zeale at the firſt, but by degrees, ſo as they grow and make

" progreſſe in theſe things in ſuch wiſe, that their good works are " more at the laſt then at the firſt, as was ſaid of the Church of " *Thyatira*, even as the man that had been blind, when Chriſt re- " ſtored him to his ſight, could at the firſt but ſee men like trees " walking, and afterward ſaw every man cleerly; and therefore it " is no good arguing to ſay theſe men have altered and corrected " ſuch things from what their apprehenſions were at firſt, and " therefore they are not to be regarded.

Now if this be no good arguing againſt Mr. *Cartwright*, and thoſe that in *England* have been ſtudious of Reformation (as indeed it is not) then it is no good Argument againſt us in this matter of Church-Covenant, to ſay we now hold and practiſe otherwiſe then we have done in former time.

Reply. " *If any ſhall here reply, that change from conformity to the ceremo-* " *nies to Worſhip God more purely is warranted by the Word, and there-* " *fore not blame-worthy, and that the ſame may be ſaid of the caſe of* " *Apollos, of the Corinthians, and Epheſians forementioned, and of* Cart- " wright, *and the reſt in his times.*

Anſw. We anſwer, that this is true, and thereby it appears, that it is not ſimply the changing a mans opinion or practiſe that can be counted blame-worthy, or offenſive, but changing without warrant of the Word; and therefore in point of Church-Covenant, the iſſue muſt not be whether we or others have formerly known and practiſed it, but whether it have ground from Gods Word; For if it have (as we hope have been proved before in this diſcourſe) then the obſerving of it, can be no cauſe of juſt offence unto others, nor imputation of inconſtancy to our ſelves, though in time paſt we had not had ſo much light as to diſcerne the neceſſitie and uſe thereof.

The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to ſeek God, though he be not cleanſed according to the purification of the Sanctuary: and grant unto all his Churches and ſervants, that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgement, that they may diſcerne the things that differ; and approve the things that are excellent, and by his Spirit of truth be led forward into all truth, till Antichriſt be utterly conſumed with the breath of his mouth, and the brightneſſe of his coming, and the holy City new Jeruſalem come down from God out of heaven, as a Bride adorned for her husband the Lambe, the Lord Jeſus, to whom be all glory of affiance and ſervice for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

AN ANSWER OF THE ELDERS OF THE SEVERALL CHURCHES IN *NEW-ENGLAND* unto Nine POSITIONS, SENT OVER TO THEM (By divers Reverend and godly Ministers in ENGLAND) to declare their Judgements therein.

Written in the Yeer, 1639.

And now published for the satisfaction of all who desire resolution in those points.

LONDON,
Printed by *T. P.* and *M. S.* for *Benjamin Allen*.
1643.

The severall *Positions* handled in this Treatise.

1. *That a stinted Forme of Prayer, or set Liturgie, is unlawfull.*
2. *That it is not lawfull to joyne in Prayers, or receive the Sacrament where a stinted Liturgie is used, or as we conceive your meaning to be in this as in the former Question, viz. where that stinted Liturgie is used.*
3. *That the children of godly and approved Christians, are not to be baptised untill their parents be set members of a Congregation.*
4. *That the parents of themselves though of approved piety, are not to be received to the Lords Supper, untill they be admitted as set Members.*
5. *That the power of Excommunication &c. is so in the Bodie of the Church, that what the major part shall allow, that must be done, though the Pastors and Governors, and part of their Assembly be of another mind, and peradventure upon more substantiall Reasons.*
6. *That none are to be admitted as set Members, but they must promise not to depart or remove, unlesse the Congregation will give leave.*
7. *That a Minister is so a Minister to a particular Congregation, that if they dislike him unjustly, or leave him, he ceaseth to be a Minister.*
8. *That a Minister cannot perform any ministeriall Act in another Congregation.*
9. *That Members in one Congregation may not communicate in another.*

AN

AN EPISTLE WRITTEN by the *Elders* of the Churches in NEW-ENGLAND, to those godly Ministers forementioned that sent over the POSITIONS.

Reverend and beloved Brethren:

IN these remote Coasts of the earth, whereunto the good hand of God hath brought us, as we do with much comfort of heart call to mind the many gracious blessings, which both with you, and from you we injoyed in our Christian and holy communion, (the memory and fruit whereof we hope shall never be blotted out) so we have also seene cause to look back to our former administrations there, and to search and trie our wayes; that wherein soever we have formerly gone astray, we might judge our selves for it before the Lord: And that seeing now God hath set before us an open doore of libertie, we might neither abuse our libertie in the Gospel, to runne out into any groundlesse unwarrantable courses, nor neglect the present opportunitie to administer (by the help of Christ) all the holy ordinances of God, according to the patterne set before us in the Scripture; In our native Countrey, when we were first called to the Ministery, many of us took some things to be indifferent and lawfull, which in after times we saw to be sinfull, and durst not to continue in the practise of them there; Afterwards some things that we bare as burthens, that is, as things inexpedient, though not utterly unlawfull; we had no cause to retain and practise the same things here, which would not have been not onely inexpedient, but unlawfull: such things as a man may tollerate when he cannot remove them, he cannot tollerate without sinne when he may remove them; Besides some things we practised there (which we speake it to our shame and griefe)

we never took it into ſerious conſideration whether they were lawfull and expedient or no, but took them for granted, and generally received; not onely by the moſt Reformed Churches, but by the moſt godly and judicious ſervants of God amongſt them; which nevertheleſſe when we came to weigh them in the ballance of the Sanctuarie, we could not find ſufficient warrant in the Word to receive them, and eſtabliſh them here: of one of theſe three kinds will theſe our preſent practiſes appeare to be, which you call our new opinions, or, Innovations here; except it be ſome few of them, which though they have been reported to you to be our Judgements and practiſes, yet are indeed farre from us: The particulars are too many, and too weightie to give you account of them, and the ground of our proceedings about them in a Letter. But to give you (if it be the will of God) the better ſatisfaction, we have ſent you a ſhort Treatiſe touching each particular, that according to your deſire you might underſtand from us how farre we do acknowledge any of theſe tenents, and upon what ground hoping that according to your promiſe, if upon due examination you ſhall find any weight in them, you will give us the right hand of fellowſhip. But if otherwiſe, you will ſend us your juſt and faithfull animadverſions, and we do not ſuſpect your loves to the truth, or your ſincere ſpeaking according to your conſcience in the ſight of God, neither taxe you as a ſide from the truth with by reſpects, whereof you complaine, verily we abhorre ſuch raſh, harſh, and preſumptuous notoriouſneſſe; we ſee as much cauſe to ſuſpect the integritie of our own hearts, as yours; and ſo much the more, as being more privie to the deceitfulneſſe of our own hearts then to yours. And we cannot but with much thankfulneſſe of heart acknowledge the many rich precious treaſures of his grace, wherewith the Lord hath furniſhed ſundrie of you above your Brethren, which cauſeth us with great reverence to accept, and receive what further light God may be pleaſed to impart unto us by you; But as we have beleeved, ſo have we hitherto practiſed, and ſo have moſt of us ſpoken: this our Anſwer to your particulars, moſt of us we may ſay, becauſe there wants not ſome Brethren amongſt us who proceed further, even to look at all ſet formes of Prayer invented by men of another age or congregation, and preſcribed to their Brethren to be read out of a book for the prayers of the Church, as Images, or Imaginations

of

of men, forbidden in the ſecond Commandement. But as we leave them to their libertie of their own judgements without prejudice, ſo do we alſo concurrè with the reſt of them, ſo farre as we all go in bearing witneſſe againſt any ſet formes, or the corruptions in them; In diſpatching whereof, we have been the more ſlow becauſe it behoved us firſt to inquire into, and to ſettle ſome controverſies amongſt our ſelves, before we could well attend to entertaine diſcourſe about forraigne queſtions which do not ſo neerly concerne our preſent eſtate and practiſe. Beſides your Letters being ſent to the Miniſters of the Churches, and ſome of us dwelling farre aſunder, it was not an eaſie thing for all of us often to meet together to conſider of theſe Queſtions, much leſſe to reſolve upon one juſt anſwer. But having at length (by the aſſiſtance of God) brought our Anſwers to this iſſue, we commend it to the bleſſing of the Lord, and in him to your Chriſtian, and judicious conſideration; where if all things be found ſafe, and duely warranted from Scripture grounds; do you alſo as ſeemeth vigilant Watchmen of the Lords flock, and faithfull witneſſes to God; If any thing ſeeme doubtfull to you, conſider and weigh it very well before you reject it: If any thing appeare to be unſound, and diſſonant from the Word (which we for our parts cannot diſcerne) we ſhall willingly attend to what further light God may ſend unto us by you: In the meane while we intreat you in the Lord, not to ſuffer ſuch apprehenſions to lodge in your minds, which you intimate in your Letters; As if we here juſtified the wayes of riged ſeparation, which ſometimes amongſt you we have formerly born witneſſe againſt: and ſo build againe the things we have deſtroyed; you know they ſeparate from your Congregations, as no Churches; from the Ordinances diſpenſed by you as meere Antichriſtian, and from your ſelves as no viſible Chriſtians. But we profeſſe unfainedly, we ſeparate from the corruptions which we conceive to be left in your Churches, and from ſuch Ordinances adminiſtred therein as we feare are not of God, but of men; And for your ſelves, we are ſo farre from ſeparating as from no viſible Chriſtians, as that you are under God in our hearts (if the Lord would ſuffer it) to live and die together; and we looke at ſundrie of you as men of that eminent growth in Chriſtianitie, that if there be any viſible Chriſtians under heaven amongſt you, are the men which for theſe many yeers have been written in your fore-

heads (*Holineſſe to the Lord*) which we ſpeak not to prejudice any truth which our ſelves are here taught and called to profeſſe, but we ſtill beleeve though perſonall Chriſtians may be eminent in their growth of Chriſtianitie: yet Churches had ſtill need to grow from apparent defects to puritie; and from Reformation to Reformation, age after age, till the Lord have utterly aboliſhed Antichriſt with the breath of his mouth, and the brightneſſe of his coming, to the full and cleare revelation of all his holy Truth; eſpecially touching the ordering of his houſe and publick worſhip; as a pledge of this our eſtimation of you, and ſincere affection to you, we have ſent you theſe Anſwers to your demand, and ſhall be readie, by the help of Chriſt, to receive back againe from you, wiſe, and juſt, and holy Advertiſements in the Lord.

Now the Lord God, and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, your Lord, and ours; lead us all unto all Truths, purge out all Leaven out of his Churches, and keep us blameleſſe and harmleſſe in his holy Faith and feare, to his heavenly kingdome, through him that hath loved us; In whom we reſt,

Your very loving Brethren,
the Elders of the Churches
in New-England.

AN

AN ANSVVER OF THE *Elders* of the severall Churches in *New-England*, unto nine *Positions* sent over to them (by divers Reverend and godly Ministers in ENGLIND) to declare their Judgements therein.

POSITION the I.

That a stinted Form of Prayer, or set Liturgie, is unlawfull.

Answ. BEfore we proceed to declare our selves concerning this Position, it will be needfull that some things be premised for the explication of the termes thereof: we suppose that first (by a Liturgie and forme of Prayer) you meane not a form of private prayer, composed for the helpe of the weaker; but that Sistome, or Body of Publick Prayer, generally used in the English Parishes, compriſed for the Churches use by other men, not infallibly guided of God to be said or read out of a book by their Ministers, as the Churches prayers: And that this is your meaning, may appeare from your Letter it self, wherein you complain, that divers in many parts of that Kingdome have left your Assemblies, because of a stinted Liturgie; now we know not of any other stinted Liturgie from which the people do absent themselves, but onely that which is in use in the English Churches; for as for a Form of Prayer in generall, we conceive your meaning cannot be of that, for it is evident that many Preachers constantly use a set form of prayer of their own making before their Sermons, with whom the people refuse not to joyne.

Secondly, by stinted prayers, and set formes, you meane such prayers as are so imposed upon the Churches and Ministers, as that they are limited to the use of that very forme of words expresst in the Book, with no addition, diminution, or alteration; For that Liturgie, & Form amongst you is in this sence set & stinted.

Thirdly, by unlawfull, you meane that we looking at that form as swerving from the Rule, neither do first practise it our selves, or

secondly

secondly, approve the use of it by others.

This being the true state of the Question, so far as it appears to us from your Letters, We answer:

1. For our own practise the Churches here do not use any stinted form of Prayers, and set Liturgies: for these and such other like Reasons.

First, because we find no necessitie of a stinted Liturgie to be used amongst us, by vertue of any Divine precept; And seeing the commission of the Apostle limited them to teach men to observe and do onely what Christ had commanded them in matters of this nature, *Matth.* 28. 20. who are we, and what are our Churches, that we should presume above this Commission? And we hope it will not be offentively taken by any godly Brethren, that we stand fast in that Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, in this as well as in any other thing.

Secondly, because the unlawfulnesse of set Formes, and stinted Liturgies, is questioned, and doubted of by many faithfull servants of Christ; whereas for Church Officers to edifie the Church by their own gifts, as well in praying as in preaching, all sorts without controversie grant it to be lawfull: Now spirituall prudence guideth Beleevers when two wayes are set before them, one doubtfull though ventured on by some; the other certainly safe and good, though neglected by many, to chuse that which is safe, declining from the other.

Thirdly, because the primitive patternes of all the Churches of God in their best times, when as touching this point they keep the rule in their eyes; whether Jewish before Christ, or Christian above an hundred yeers after Christ, yeeld not the least foot steps to shew us another safe way to walke in, then this which we have chosen. As for after times towards the end of the second and beginning of the third Century, we know how farre the Churches were then degenerated, and declined from their first puritie; nor do we marvell at it, seeing in the Apostles time the mystery of iniquitie began to work, and it was then foretold, that the power of godlinesse would in after times be exchanged for empty forms; in which respect we look not at them as our guides, neither in this or other particulars; nor warranted by the Rule: herein following the advise of *Cyprian*, who himselfe saw the corruptions of those times, *Non est attendendum quid aliquis ante nos faciendum putaverit,*

taverit, sed quid qui ante omnes est Christi facerit & faciendum præceperit. To conclude, seeing our Christian liberty frees us from binding our selves to any religious observances, whereunto the written Word doth not bind us; And seeing spirituall prudence directs us to chuse those wayes which on all hands are confessed to be safe, avoiding those that are doubtfull and hazardous, and seeing it will not be safe for us needlesly to swerve from the constant practise of all Churches that are recorded in the Scriptures, that held forth as a cloud of witnesses for us to follow in matters of this nature; we therefore, may not, do not, dare not, use that forme of prayer, and stinted Liturgie in those Churches; more particularly in that we do not use that Forme of Prayer and stinted Liturgie which is in use among your selves: this and such other like Reasons have induced us thereunto.

First, the many and just exceptions whereunto that Liturgie is liable for matter and manner: for the proofe whereof, we referre you to those servants of God who have gone before us in witnessing against the same; amongst others, to Dr. *Cartwright*, and the Abridgement.

Secondly, In as much as that Liturgie was never commanded of God, and hath been greatly abused to idolatry and superstition, and is not of any necessarie use, therefore we are afraid to bring it into the worship of God, as knowing (*Exod.* 20.) the jealousie of the Lord in matters of this nature, and how strictly he commanded his people, that all monuments of Idolatrie and superstition should be abolished from among them: *Deut.* 5. 25, 26. *Exod.* 13. *Isa.* 30. 32. 2. *Cor.* 6. 17. in which respect the holy Ghost hath greatly commended *Jacob*, *David*, *Jehu*, *Hezekia*, and *Josia*, for taking away the remembrance of such things, (*Gen.* 33, 24. *Psal.* 6. 4. 2. *King.* 20. 26, 27. 18. 4. 2. *King.* 23. all the Chap.) and when other Kings of *Judah*, came short of the same zeale, the Scripture notes it as a blemish in them, that the high places were not taken away, albeit the people did not sacrifice in them to false gods, but onely to the Lord, 2. *Chron.* 15. 17. and 20. 32. and 32. 17. yea moreover it appeareth by the Scripture that some things that had a good originall and use, if they be not still necessarie and commanded of God, are unlawfull, when once they are known to be defiled by Idolatrie, and abused to it, 1. *King.* 18. 14. *Hos.* 2. 16. 17. As the brazen Serpent was at the first Gods institution,

though but temporarie, but when the children of Israel burnt incense to it, *Hezekiah* is commended for breaking it in peeces: and the Lord witnessed of him, that herein *he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and according to his Commandements which he commanded Moses.* 2. King. 18. 3. 46. How much more in the like case ought other things to be removed which never were commanded of God, but onely were devised by men; And that that Liturgie hath been superstitiously abused, may be cleare to any that shall consider. It is the same for substance that was used in the dayes of Poperie; and therefore when the Papists in *Devonshire*, and *Cornwell* had made a commotion and Rebellion upon the change of Religion in the dayes of King *Edward* the sixth, it was told then by the King, for the pacifying of them, that it was the self-same service in English which had been before in Latine, (it remaineth good in English, for nothing is altered) And Pope *Pius* the fifth did see so little variation in it from the Latine Service, that had been formerly used in that Kingdome, that he would have ratified it by his Authoritie, if Queene *Elizabeth* would have so retained it: And many of the people put such holinesse in it, that they thinke God is not rightly worshipped, nor the Sabbath observed, nor the Sacraments sufficiently administred, if there be no reading of the Service. And others put such holinesse and necessitie in it, that they preferre it before Gods holy ordinances of preaching the Word, in so much as the Ministers are in danger of being called into question, and of being censured, if they do not read the Liturgie every Lords day, without omitting any part thereof, either in respect of preaching, or other wayes: This Argument is used in the abridgement, against Conformitie to the Ceremonies, and we do not see but it is as strong against the Liturgie.

Thirdly, In regard of the many wofull scandalls and dangerous consequences of using that Liturgie, of which, wee suppose, you are not ignorant: to mention but two; first, the hardening of Papists, who are imboldened to thinke better of their owne Breviaries, and Masse-Bookes, seeing most of that Liturgie hath been extracted out of these Bookes, and rather fetched from them, then from the formes used in any parts of the reformed Churches; Secondly, The countenancing and establishing of an unlearned Idoll-Ministery, of not-Preaching-Curates, Non-residents, Pluralists,

ralists, &c. In whose skirts is to be found the bloud of so many thousand soules, living and dying in their sinnes, whilest they ignorantly content themselves with, and harden themselves in some emptie formes of Religion, and blinde devotion, which are begot and cherished chiefly by such Prayers and Ministery: Neither is there lesse scandall thereby (we meane) not onely taken but given them, by the eating of an Idolethite in the Idolls Temple, condemned by the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 8. 7. 10. For if the eating of an Idolethite by him that had knowledge, and knew that an Idoll was nothing, and that all meats were lawfull, did imbolden others to honour the Idoll, and therefore was a scandall given, so also is it in this case.

Fourthly, Seeing that Booke is so imposed, as that the Minister in reading of it, is limited to the very words set downe, without any addition, diminution, or alteration, therefore wee dare not use it.

For first the Lord himselfe hath not limited his people to his owne forme, therefore wee see not how it can be lawfull for to be limited to other mens formes; for in thus doing, we should subject our selves to the exercise of such an authoritie and power of the Prelates, as in this case puts forth a stronger Act of limiting power then Christ himselfe, who doth not limit us to those formes which himselfe hath set downe in Scripture; for though wee acknowledge the Lords Prayer, and other formes set downe in Scripture, may be lawfully used as prayers (due cautions being observed) yet there is not a limitation lying upon the Churches, in the use of these prayers; And therefore we doe not finde that the Apostles ever used that forme taught by Christ in those very words, much lesse limited themselves to it when they prayed; nor did they teach the Churches so to doe.

Secondly, If the Lord would not have us limit our selves to our owne formes, whilest we are exercising our owne gifts, which he hath specially sanctified to edifie his Churches, *Act.* 6. 4. *Eph.* 4. 8. 1 *Cor.* 12. 17. Least wee should quench, or at least straighten his Spirit in prayer, 1 *Thes.* 1. 19. Would he not have us then limited to other mens formes, which have not been in like sort sanctified of God, but will rather quench or straighten the Spirit of God, whilest we are so limited to them.

Thirdly, The entertainment of this forme hath been a manifest

snare unto other Churches, who upon the same ground on which they have received this forme into the desire, have been limited to others in the Pulpit, by the means whereof the poore Church of Christ hath been wholly deprived of the publique use of the Ministers gifts in prayer, and the Spirit of prayer in the Ministers in publique hath been greatly restrained.

Secondly, As for our judgements concerning the practise of others, who use this Liturgie in our native Countrey, we have been alwayes unwilling to expresse our minds there against, unlesse wee had been necessarily called thereunto: And at this time we thinke it not expedient to expresse our selves any further concerning this matter, as loath to entermeddle in the affaires of other Churches; but contenting our selves with, and blessing the Lord for these Liberties, which wee by the mercy of God doe here enjoy, reserving also due reverence to the judgements of our beloved Countrey-men, who concerning this matter may be otherwise minded.

POSITION the II.

That it is not lawfull to joyne in prayers, or receive the Sacrament, where a stinted Liturgie is used, or as wee conceive your meaning to be in this as in the former question, VIZ. *where that stinted Liturgie is used.*

Answ. IT seemes by your Letters, the ground of this your Position hath been the seperation of divers from your Assemblies, because of a stinted Liturgie; And we are not ignorant of that ridged Seperation of divers people, who withdraw themselves from an able faithfull Ministery, as no Ministery of Christ, and from their Congregations, as no Churches of Christ, because of some corruptions, from which through want of light (not love of the truth,) they are not throughly clensed; against which practice we have ever witnessed: As for our judgements concerning the Position it selfe, wee would premise two things:

First, Concerning the persons reading this Liturgie, which may be either an ungodly, or unable Ministery, or an able and godly.

Secondly, Concerning the Liturgie it selfe, which may be understood,

derstood, either of the whole, or some selected prayers, which may be conceived to be the least offensive.

Now if the Question be of joyning in prayer, where and when that whole Liturgie is used, or when that which is used, is read by an unable and ungodly Minister, wee then see not how it can be lawfull to joyne in prayer in such cases; For the prayers of the Minister are not his private prayers, but the publique prayers of the whole Assembly, whose mouth he is unto God; And when the prayers offered by the Minister, as a living holy acceptable service to God, are not through humane frailtie, but otherwise for matter and manner corrupt, we see not what warrant any man hath to joyne in such prayers, *Act.* 1. 13, 14. When they are joyned therein with an insufficient Ministery, they doe not onely countenance them in their place and office, whom the Lord hath rejected from being his Priests, *Hos.* 14. 6. but also set up those Idolls and *means of worship to edifie themselves by, which God never appointed in his holy Word, *Ezek.* 11. 17.

But if the Question be of joyning in some few selected prayers, read by an able and faithfull Minister out of the Booke; as of the one side wee are tender of imputing sinne to those that so joyne, so on the other side, we are not without feare least such joyning may be found unlawfull; unlesse it may appeare that the Ministers with whom wee have communion in reading those prayers, doe neither give any scandall, by reading of them, nor give unlawfull honour to a thing abused to Idolatry and superstition, nor doe suffer themselves to be sinfully limited in the reading of them.

* By this Argument all as well as a part of the Common-prayer-Booke, must of necessitie be rejected.

Position the III.

That the children of godly and approved Christians, are not to be Baptized untill their Parents be set members of a Congregation.

Position the IV.

That the Parents of themselves though of approved pietie, are not to be received to the Lords Supper, untill they be admitted as set members.

These two Positions may be maintained with one and the same defence, being somewhat coincident, and therefore wee thus joyne them, as if they were but one.

First, therefore to prevent all mistakes, it may please you to take notice, that we are not of their judgement, who refuse all religious communion with such as are not Church-members, nor doe wee appropriate in this priviledge of the Seales, onely to the members of our owne Church, excluding all other Churches of Christ from the same, though they may be through error or humane frailtie defective in some matters of order; provided that the libertie of our Churches be preserved, of receiving such satisfaction as is meete, as well by Letters of Recommendation from such Churches, as otherwise; if it be requisite concerning those whom wee admit into fellowship in the Seales; for as wee account it our dutie to keepe the unitie of the Spirit inviolate, with any in whom we descerne any fruits of the Spirit; so we hold our selves bound to discharge this dutie according to our spirituall communion, in prayer, holy conference, and other religious actions of like nature, wee maintaine with all godly persons, though they be not in Church-order: But Church-Communion we hold (with Church-admitting to fellowship of the Seales) the knowne, approved, and orderly recommended member of any true Church; But to fellowship in the Censures admittance of members, and choice of officers, onely the members of that particular Church, whereof they and wee, or any of us stand members.

These things being premised to consideration, whereupon our judgements and practise is swaid; for administration of the Seales onely to such as are members, a priviledge peculiar thereunto in ordinary dispensation, *Rom.* 9. 4. *Act.* 2. 41, 42. 47. Indeed the Preaching of the Word is not so, being an Ordinance given not onely for the edifying of the Churches already gathered, but also for the gathering of men to the Church that are yet without, whereas the dispencing of the Seales, are an Ordinance given onely for the edifying of the Church; being ordained, not for the gathering of it; And becaufe there is now no Nationall Church on earth wherein the Seales are dispenced, there being neither place nor time, nor Officers, nor Ordinances appointed in the New Testament by Christ the Lord, for any such Assembly as the *Jewes* had under *Moses*: It remaines that the Christian Churches whereunto these priviledges are given, are Congregationall, consisting onely of so many as may and doe meet together ordinarily in one place, for the publique worship of God, and their edifying. Hence

it is

it is that we reade so much in the New Testament of Churches, in the Plurall number; The Churches of Christ, *Rom.* 16. 6. The Churches of God, 1 *Cor.* 11. 16. The Churches of the Saints, 1 *Cor.* 14. 33. And not onely when they were of divers Nations, the Churches of the Gentiles, *Rom.* 16. 12. but also of the same Nation, the Churches of Judea, *Gal.* 1. 20. 1 *Thes.* 2. 14. Not onely when the Countrey was of a large circuite and extent, the Churches of Asia, 1 *Cor.* 16. 19. but also of a small part of the Countrey, the Churches of Gallatia, *Gal.* 1. 2. Yea, when two Congregations in severall Cities are spoken of, they are called Churches, as the Church of Jerusalem, *Act.* 15. 22. and the Church of Antioch, *Act.* 14. 27. & 15. 25. 30. To winde up all, seeing the Churches under the Gospel, are Congregationall, and that Baptisme and the Lords Supper, belongs onely to the Churches, it will follow that as a Citie priviledge belongeth onely to Citizens and their children; so Baptisme and the Lords Supper, being Church-priviledges, belongs onely to the particular Churches, and their seede, and that seeing *Sigillum sequitur donum*, to apply them to others, what is it but to abuse them? As a Seale of a Corporation is abused, when added to confirme the Grant of a priviledge which is peculiar to any Towne Corporation, to one that being no freeman of that Corporation is uncapable thereof.

We are not ignorant of what is wont to be objected against what hath been said, from Instance of the Centurion, the Eunuch, *Lydia*, the Jaylor, &c. How of the Eunuch no more was required to Baptisme, then beleeving with his whole heart; In the Centurion, the Apostle *Peter* upon his being Baptized with the Spirit, inferred his right to Baptisme with water; So in *Lydia*, the Jaylor, and many others; It being the constant expression of the holy Ghost, *They beleeved, and were Baptized*, without any regard to their Church-Estate. *Object.*

Whereunto wee Answer; Where the holy Ghost is given and received (which was the case of the Centurion) and where faith is professed according to Gods Ordinance (which was the case of the rest) there none may hinder them from being Baptized, *viz.* by such as have power to Baptize them: In the Instances given, Baptisme was administred, either by Apostles, or Evangelists, or by ordinary Pastours: The persons Baptized, if they were members of Churches, they had a right to Baptisme in their estate; *Answ.*

And

And the Apostles being Officers of all Churches, might dispence the Seales to them where ever they came, which yet will not warrant ordinary Church-Officers to doe the same; nor is it improbable, but that all these were in Church-order. *Aretus* is of opinion in *Act.* 9. 18. *Act.* 8. 37. that the Centurion had a constituted Church in his house; The Eunuch comming to *Jerusalem* to worship, argueth him to be a Proselyte, and member of the Jewish Church, yet dissolved, and therefore upon profession of the Christian faith, capable of Church-priviledges at that time: As for *Lydia* and the Jaylor, it appeareth that in the beginning of the Gospel, there was a Church at *Philippi*, which communicated with *Paul* concerning giving and receiving, and he expressely sayth before his departure from Macedonia, *Phil.* 4. 18. which departure was immediately upon the Jaylors conversion; In which respect what should hinder that *Lydia* and the Jaylor should first be joyned to the Church, & then to be Baptized, though it be not mentioned in that story, as neither is here mention of a Christian Church, which yet *Paul* mentioneth in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, at least it is probable, that *Lydia* was a member of the Jewish Church, because shee is said to be one that worshipped God; But if any man thinke that they were not members of any Church yet Baptized, though we see not how it will be proved, yet if it were so, the objection doth no whit weaken the Argument, which speaketh of the ordinary dispensation of the Seales, and not what was done in an extraordinary way; So that suppose that in the case alledged, Baptisme was dispenced to some that were not in Church-fellowship, yet the example of the Apostles and Evangelists in so doing, will not warrant ordinary Pastours to doe the like.

The Reason of the difference, why Apostles and Evangelists might administer Baptisme out of Church Orders, whereof Pastors and Teachers may not is double.

1. *Reas.* First, Because their calling gave them illimited power over all men, especially Christians whereunto they came; But we do not find that ordinarie Pastors and Teachers can do an act of power, but onely over their own Church, which hath called them to watch over them in the Lord.

2. *Reas.* Secondly, Because they were assisted with an immediate direction and guidance of the holy Ghost, in the particulars of their administrations, in the case alledged; But ordinarie Church Officers

cers are to walke according to the ordinarie Rules of the Scriptures in their dispensation of the seals; and not to expect immediate inspiration, and extraordinarie Revelations for their help in such cases: This difference betweene Apostles and ordinarie Church Officers must needs be acknowledged, or otherwise a man might from their examples justifie Baptisme in private places.

If it be objected, that Baptisme (as Circumcision also formerly) is a seale of the righteousnesse of faith, and therefore where faith is, and the righteousnesse of it, the seal may be added also, even to those that are not in Church-Covenant by vertue of their relations to the Covenant of grace to all Beleevers. *Rom.* 4. 11. *Gen.* 17. 1. to 12. *Object.*

We answer: The scope of the Apostle in that place of the *Rom.* 4. is not to define a Sacrament, nor to shew what is the proper adæquate subject of the Sacrament: But to prove by the example of *Abraham* that a sinner is justified before God, not by works, but by faith, (thus) as *Abraham* the Father of the faithfull was justified before God, so must his seed be, that is, all beleevers whether Jews or Gentiles, circumcised or uncircumcised, for therefore *Abraham* received Circumcision which belonged to the Jews to confirme that righteousnesse which he had before, even whilest he was uncircumcised, that he might be the Father of both. But lest any man should thinke his Circumcision needlesse, if he was justified by faith before circumcised, he addeth that his Circumcision was of use, as a seale to confirme to him his faith, and the righteousnesse which is by faith; yet as justification is not the onely thing that Circumcision sealed, but the whole Covenant also made with *Abraham* and his seed was sealed thereby: so *Abraham* is to be considered in using Circumcision, not simply, or onely as a Beleever without Church relation, but as confederate, a beleever, and so in the state and order of a visible Church, though the Apostle maketh mention onely of the righteousnesse of faith as sealed thereby, which was as served for his purpose. Now that circumcision sealed the Church-Covenant, may appear from *Gen.* 17. 9, 10, 11. where you may find that *Abraham* & his seed, though beleevers, were not circumcised till God called them into Church-Covenant. There is the same reason and use of Baptisme to us, which serveth to seale to our justification as Circumcision did: *Answ.*

yet not that alone, but also the whole Covenant with all the priviledges, as Adoption, *Act.* 2. 38. and Sanctification, *Gal.* 3. 26. 27. *Tit.* 3. 5. fellowship with Christ in his affliction, *Tit.* 3. 5. and the salvation of our soules; *Matth.* 20. 23. And the resurrection of our bodies, 1. *Pet.* 3. 21. And not onely the Covenant of grace which is common to all beleevers, 1. *Corinth.* 15. 29. But Church-Covenant also which is peculiar to confederates, according to that of the Apostle, *By one Spirit We are all baptised into one body*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 13. And by one Body, he meaneth that particular Church of *Corinth*; whereunto he writeth, and saith, *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular, ver.* 17. And therefore Church membership is required as well to the orderly partaking of Baptisme, as it was of Circumcision: nor do we find that Circumcision was administred to all that were in the Covenant of grace (as all beleevers were) but onely to such, of them as were joyned to the people of the God of *Abraham*. *Melchisedech* was under the covenant of grace, so was *Lot*, and *Job*, and his foure friends, yet we no where read that they were circumcised, nor do beleeve they were: so that if Circumcision were administred to none but those that were joyned to *Abrahams* familie, and the Church of God in his seed, then may not Baptisme in ordinarie course be administred to any beleevers now, unlesse they be joyned to the Church of Christ: For, *Parum par est ratio*; But the first is true, therefore the second also.

Object. If any shall say, that a man may be a member of a visible Catholick Church, that stands in no relation to any particular Congregation.

Answ. We answer, as we have alreadie said, we know no such Church in the New Testament, as a visible Catholick Church, wherein the seales are to be dispenced: if any man think otherwise, and will undertake to prove it from Scripture grounds, we shall gladly weigh his Argument, and returne such answer as the case will beare.

Secondly, the Ministers of *Scotland* in their examination, and re-examination of the Articles of *Perth*, in the last Article touching the administration of the Sacraments in private places, do expresse their Judgements in such termes, as may serve for a full answer to this Objection.

Visible communion (say they) in the holy things of God is the end

end of our union, and consolation of a particular Church: because we cannot attaine to visible communion in the holy things of God immediately, but by our communion with a particular Congregation, this communion must not be violated.

The second consideration, the ordinarie administration of the seales is limited to the Ministery, and the Ministery to a particular Church; therefore the seals also must necessarily be proper to the Church, and to the members thereof.

Thirdly, that the administration of the seals is limited to the Minister, is evident from the first Institution, where God hath joyned to preach, *viz.* by office, and to baptise together; therefore we may not separate them: for howsoever any one man may by the appointment of the Lord, and master of the family, signifie his mind, and deliver a message from him to the familie, yet the dispensing of a fit portion of food to every one of the houshold, is a branch of the Stewards office. Indeed the keyes are given to the whole Church, yet the exercise and dispensation of them in this as well as in other particulars is committed to the Ministers, who are called to be stewards of the mysteries of God, 1. *Cor.* 4.1. And no Church-office can be orderly performed by any, but such as are called thereunto; nor will God vouchsafe his presence and blessing whereupon all spirituall efficacie depends, in an ordinance, but when it is dispensed by such whom he hath ordained and appointed thereunto.

Secondly, that the Minister is limited to the Church, appeareth from evident Texts of Scripture, *Act.* 14. 23. so also upon this ground, 1. *Cor.* 4. 17. 1. *Pet.* 5. 2. *Act.* 20. 28. The office is founded in the relation betweene the Church and the officer: wherefore take away the relation, and the office (and so the work) ceaseth; for where he hath no power, there he may not do any act of power, and he hath no power where he hath no relation by office: herein the proportion holds betweene an Officer of a Towne Corporate, and of a Church, that as the power of the former is onely within his owne corporation; so the power of the latter is confined to his own congregation.

The third Consideration: Circumcision and the Passeover onely are to be administred to the members of the Church, therefore Baptisme, and the Lords Supper is to be administred also, &c. The consequence is made good by the puritie of these ordinances: for

if the Argument hold strong for the proofe of *Pædo-baptisme*, which is taken from the circumcision of infants, why may we not as well infer a necessitie of Church-membership to baptisme from the necessitie of it to circumcision? And that Circumcision was peculiar to the members of the Church, may appeare in that persons circumcised, and they onely might eat the Passeover, and they might enter into the Temple, which was the priviledge of Church-members.

In our answer to the second Objection against the first Consideration, we have shewed you that Circumcision was not administred to all that were under the Covenant of grace, (which all beleevers were) but onely to such of them as joyned themselves to the Church: As first in *Abrahams* family, whereunto Baptisme doth so farre answer, that the Apostle accounteth these expressions equivolent: *Col.* 2. 12. to be circumcised in Christ with circumcision made with hands, and to be buried with Christ in Baptisme, indeed in some things they differ: as onely the males were circumcised, whereas also with us females are baptised; the reason is, because God hath limited circumcision to the males, but under the Gospel that difference is taken away.

Againe, Circumcision was administred in the private familie, but Baptisme onely in the publick Assemblies of the Church. The Reason of this difference is, because they were bound to circumcise the males on the eighth day, but that would not stand with going to the Temple, which was too farre off for the people to bring their children from all the parts of *Judea* to be circumcised on the eighth day: nor had they alwayes opportunitie of a solemne Convention in their Synagogues on every eighth day when some child or other might be brought to be circumcised. But there is no precise day set down for Baptisme; nor are opportunities of publique Assemblies so remote when Churches are gathered in a congregationall frame; but that every first day of the week Baptisme may be administred if it be required. Againe for the aforesaid Reason circumcision required not a particular Minister, for ought we find in the Scriptures, but it is not so in Baptisme, as hath been shewed in the second Consideration: But no good reason may be given why in this they should not both agree, (*viz.*) that they are both to be dispensed onely to members of the visible Church, it hath been proved in the first Consideration.

They

They that are not capable of Church-censures, are not capable of Church-priviledges; But they that are not within Church-Covenant, are not capable of Church-censures; *Ergo.* 4 *Consid.*

The Proposition is evident; the Assumption may be proved, 1 *Cor.* 5. 12. *What have I to doe to judge them that are without:* Now to be without is not onely the case of Heathens, and Excommunicants, but of some beleevers also: who though by internall union with Christ, they are within the Covenant of grace, yet being not externally joyned to the visible body of Christ, (a particular Church) are in regard of a visible Church-communion said to be without: to this purpose is that Text alledged by other Divines also, as Doctor *Ames.*

Wee may adde hereunto for a fift Consideration, the evill and pernicious consequences of extending Communion in Church-priviledges beyond the bond of Church-fellowship: for thus; 5 *Consid.*

First, the extraordinary office of Apostles, and the ordinary office of Pastours and Teachers, will be much confounded, if the latter be as illimited as the former in the execution of their office, beyond the bounds of their owne particular Churches.

Secondly, The second distinction of Church-Assemblies from the confused multitudes is abrogated; if without membership in a particular Church, the Parents may Communicate with the Church in the Lords Supper, and their seede in Baptisme.

Thirdly, The Church shall indanger the prophaning of the Seales, and want one speciall means whereby the grace and pietie of men may be discerned and made knowne, for if without respect to their Church-estate, men of approved pietie, as you say, are to be admitted to fellowship in the Seales; how shall their pietie be approved to the Church, not by their owne report of themselves alone, without the attestation of such as are approved by the Church? And how can such beare witnes to their approved pietie, who against light refuse to professe subjection to the Gospel of Christ, by orderly joyning themselves with fellowship to some approved Church of Christ, as members thereof, when they have oppurtunitie thereunto? Seeing such Church-fellowship is an action of true pietie required of all beleevers in the second Commandement; and true pietie frameth mens spirits to have respect to all Gods Commandements; and we have had much experience of it; that men of approved pietie in the judgements of some, have

been found too light, not onely in the judgement of others, but also in their owne consciences, when they have come to the tryall in offering themselves to be members of Churches: with such a blessing hath God followed this Ordinance of taking hold of Church-Covenant, by publique profession of faith and repentance, before men be admitted to the Seales: But this means of discovery of mens pietie and sinceritie, would be wholly left, if men should be admitted to the Lords Table, without entering into Church-fellowship.

6 *Consid.* None have power to dispence the Seales but those that are called to the office of the Ministery, and no man can be so called till first there be a Church to call him: Seeing the power of calling Ministers is given by Christ to the Church; and then it followes, that all those who desired to partake in the Seales, are bound to joyne themselves together in the Church state, that so they may call a Minister to dispence the Seales unto them. And seeing this dutie by the appointment of Gods Law, is not onely upon some Christians, but equally upon all, therefore no Christian can expect by the appointment of God, to partake in the Seales till he hath joyned himselfe in Church-fellowship, and in the call of the Ministery. And indeed seeing in a Church, a Minister called by the Church, is of such necessitie for dispencing of the Seales, it may seeme unreasonable that Christians should be bound to become a Church, and to call a Minister, that so the Seales may be dispenced, and other men (when this is done) may not have equall libertie to the Seals, which refuse to joyne unto the Church. In consideration that our practise may not be censured, as novell and singular, give us leave to produce a president of the like case observed and approved by publique Countenance in the dayes of *Edward* the Sixt (of blessed and famous memory) who in the yeare 1550. granted *Johannes a Lasco*, a learned Nobleman of *Poland*, and under the Broad Seale of *England*, got libertie to gather a Church of strangers in *London*, and to order themselves according as they should finde to be according to the Scriptures. Amongst other godly orders established in the Church that w^ch^ concerned the Administration of Baptisme, to prevent the prophaning of it, (wee will report in *Alasco* his owne words) *Baptisme in Churches*, saith he, *is administred in the publique Assembly of the Church, after the publique Sermon; For seeing Baptisme doth so belong to the whole Church, that none*

none ought to be driven backe which is a member of the Church, nor to be admitted to it which is not a member of it; truely it is equall that they should be performed publiquely in the Assembly of the whole Church, which belongeth to the whole Church in common. Againe he addeth; *Many seeing our Churches are (by Gods blessing) so established by the Kings Majestie, that they may be, as it were, a Parish of strangers, dispersed throughout the Citie, or a body Corporate* (as it is called in the Kings Graunt) *and yet all strangers doe not joyne themselves to our Churches; yea, there are those whilest they avoyd all Churches, will pretend to the English Church, that they are joyned with us: and to us, that they are joyned to the English Churches, and so doe abuse both them and us; Least the English Churches and the Ministers thereof should be deceived by the impostures of such men, and that under colour of our Churches, wee doe Baptize their Infants alone, who have joyned themselves to our Churches by publique confession of their Faith, and observatton of the Ecclesiasticall discipline. And that our Church may be certaine that the Infants that are to be Baptized, are their seede who have joyned themselves in manner aforesaid, the Father of the Infant to be Baptized (if possible he can) or other men or women of notable credit in the Church, doe offer them to Baptisme, and doe publique professe, that it is the seede of the Church, and that wee suffer no strangers to offer Infants to Baptisme in our Churches, who hath not made publique profession of his Faith, and willingly submitted himselfe to the discipline of our Churches; least otherwise they who present the children to Baptisme, might in time plead that they belong to other Churches, and so should deceive the English Churches and their Ministers.*

To those that presented Infants to Baptisme, they propounded three questions; The first was, *Are these Infants which you offer the seede of our Church, that they may lawfully here be baptized by our Ministery.*

Answer, *Yea*; This Instance is the more to be regarded, because *Alasco* affirmeth in the Preface to that booke, that this libertie was by the King graunted to them, out of his desire to settle a like reformation in the *English* Churches, which is in effect you see the same with our practise in this particular.

POSITION

POSITION the V.

That the power of Excommunication, &c. is so in the Bodie of the Church, that what the major part shall allow, that must be done, though the Pastours and Governours, and part of their Assembly be of another minde, and peradventure upon more substantiall Reasons.

Answ. IF the Question had been, whether the power of Excommunication lyes in the body of the Congregation, consisting of Officers and members? Our Answer should be Affirmative, and according hereunto also is our practise, and wee hope your judgements and ours are not different herein; But seeing the Question is, whether it is so in the Body of the Congregation, that what the *Major* part shall allow that must be done, though the Pastours and Governours, and part of the Assembly, doe dissent upon more substantiall Reasons.

Our Answer is Negative, *viz.* that the power of Excommunication is not sealed in the Congregation, neither ought it to be in any of the Churches of the Lord Jesus, who ought not to carry matters by number of votes against God, as this Position implyeth, but by strength of rule and reason according to God. The power of the Apostles themselves was not to doe things against truth, but for the truth, 2 *Cor.* 13. 8. and not for destruction, but for edification, 2 *Cor.* 10. 8. And the same may be said concerning the power which God hath given to you, and if any Church amongst us have swarved from this Rule, which is more then we know, we doe not allow them in such a practice, but should be ready as the Lord should help to convince them of their sinne therein.

POSITION the VI.

That none are to be admitted as set Members, but they must promise not to depart or remove, unlesse the Congregation will give leave.

OUr Answer hereunto is briefly this, Wee judge it were expedient, and most according to Rule, that such Brethren as are in Covenant with the Church, and our selves as fellow-members, and

and have committed their soules to us as Ministers, should not forsake our fellowship, nor abruptly breake away from us, when, and whether they please: But first approve themselves therein to their brethrens consciences, and their counsell in so weightie a matter: For which wee propound to your consideration these two Reasons following.

The former is drawne from the nature of the Church-Covenant, and confession in these foure particulars. 1. *Reas.*

First, Every member at his admission doth openly professe, and solemnly promise, that by Christs helpe assisting, he will not onely in generall give up himselfe as to the Lord, to be guided by him, so to the Church according to God, to be directed by them (which is no more then the members of the Church of *Macedonia* did, 2 *Cor.* 8. 5. in a parallell case) but also in particulars, that he will performe all duties of Brotherly love and faithfulnesse to all the members of the Body, as of diligent watchfulnesse over all his brethren, throughly to prevent sinne; so of faithfull admonition after their falls, to regaine them to the Lord from their sinne: therefore men are injoyned hereunto, & that deeply condemned in *Cain* that he would not doe that dutie of being his Brothers keeper, *Levit.* 19. 17. and by Christ himselfe, *Mat.* 18. 15. and by *Paul* also, *Gal.* 6. 1.

Secondly, Those ingagements named, are not made onely by the members admitted to the Church, but by the Church backe againe to the members; So that thereby the whole Church in generall, and every member in particular, stands as well in conscience bound to performe all duties of love and watchfulnesse to him, as he doth to them. And this wee doe according to the golden Rule of love and equitie enjoyned by our Saviour, *Mat.* 7. 12. fearing the contrary practise of Scribes and Pharisees, so much condemned by Christ, of laying greater burdens on others then we our selves are willing to undergoe, *Mat.* 23. 4.

Thirdly, These promises they are lawfully and mutually made, that members (as also the whole Church) are bound not onely every one for himselfe actually to performe them, but passively also to suffer his Brethren to doe these offices upon and towards himselfe; if he neglect his former, he shall falsifie his Covenant, before God, Angells, and men made, and so not onely breake promise to his Brethren, contrary to *Psal.* 15. 4. but also in some sort commit

the sinne of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, in lying to the holy Ghost, condemned and punished secretly by Gods own hand, *Act.* 5 3. 10. If he failes in the latter, he shall not onely be guiltie of the same sinne of the breach of Covenant with God and man, as in the former, but shall adde unto it this folly of despising counsell so much commended, *Prov.* 12. 15. 1. 7. And shall also proclaime this his folly and pride, by shewing to all the Church that he is wise in his own eyes, and leane unto his own wisedome, both reproved, *Prov.* 3. 7. 13. 4. Seeing need of no further light to be held forth by his brethren, then what he apprehends himself, which is one of the greatest properties of folly it self.

From all these things premised, it appeares we can do no lesse (and yet we do no more) then require a Member before he depart according to our Covenant, thus lawfully, deliberately, and mutually made, to expresse to his Brethren his desire of departing; and the place and societie to which he tends, whether to a godly Church where he may be further edified, or to some corrupt Assembly where he may be destroyed. And secondly, his grounds and Reasons which move him so to do, which if they hold good, being scanned by the Word, he may not onely be confirmed in his way by the consent and advise of many, but counselled also how to manage his departure for his best comfort: and so after all solemnize with the whole Churches prayers, and blessing in the name of Christ dismissed. But if his grounds be either none at all, or weake, or sinfull, and that his desire of departing savours of self-will, inordinate love of gaine, rash precipitancie, or a spirit of Schisme, more strongly then of sound Reason: Then what can we, what dare we, do lesse without breach of Covenant, then in love and tendernesse, shew him his weaknesse, disswade him from his purpose, and refuse to consent? Yet if after all this, we see his spirit stedfastly and stiffely bent for a departure, then, though we dare not act against our light by consenting or counselling, yet if his sinne be apparent, and danger eminent, we use rather through Indulgence (in cases of like nature) to suspend our Vote against him, as not willing against his will to detaine him, abhorring to make our Churches places of Restraint and imprisonment.

Object. But if any man should object, that this Argument holds firme, where this our Church-Covenant is allowed to be lawfull, but with some it is questioned. Some

Some indeed have questioned the necessitie of the Church-Covenant, but we hope our Reverend Brethren that we write unto do not question the lawfulnesse of such a Covenant, being nothing else for the matter of it, but a promise of doing such Christian duties, as the Gospel of Christ requires of all Saints in Church state: For as we do not hereby promise to performe any new duty to our Brethren which was not before commanded us of the Lord, but onely review and renew our purpose afresh, performing such duties to that particular Body into which we are there to be incorporated, as were before injoyned in the Word; as to love each other, and to watch over each other (out of love) for their good, to be readie to give counsell to, and take counsell from each other, to prevent sinne in them, or gaine them from sin, all which are plentifully and frequently held forth in the Scriptures: for the defect of which care and watchfulnesse, all the Body shall be wrapped in the same guilt and punishment with the members that commit the sinne, as the whole Church of Israel was in *Achans* sin and punishment. *Answ.*

Secondly, Its a thing very seasonable, and a knowne fundamentall rule in all Societies, that he that is incorporate thereunto, and so participates of the priviledges thereof, should ingage himselfe to conforme to all such lawfull rights and orders as are expedient for the well being of the Society, the contrary whereunto will be a thing injurious to him to offer, and confusion to themselves to accept.

A second Ground, is drawne from the necessarie Ruine that may fall upon the Body, if every particular member should depart at his own pleasure; for as every Societie, so much more a Church of Saints, both from principles of Nature, and Christianity also, not onely lawfully may, but in duty are bound, to indeavour the preservation of it self: And therefore timely to foresee, and wisely to prevent all such things, as would bring destruction to it self. Now if any member might when and wherefore he please, without consent of the Church depart away from it, this may by unavoidable consequence destroy the whole: For if one man may so depart, why may not another also, though never so usefull in that Body, whose absence might much change the well being of it: and if one, why not 2. 6. 10. 12. as well as one? for where will you stop, seeing all may plead the same libertie? and if members *2. Ground.*

may so do, why may not the Pastor and Teacher also, seeing they are tyed to him by the same relation that he is to them? And so the principall falling, the whole building must fall down. And if that may be so in one Church, why not in all? and so Christ should have no certain setled Church on earth.

POSITION the VII.

That a Minister is so a Minister to a particular Congregation, that if they dislike him unjustly, or leave him, he ceaseth to be a Minister.

OVr Answer to this consists in two branches.

First, in case a Minister be set aside by the Church, meerly through his own default. Secondly, by the Churches fault, without any desert of his. In the former case, it is evident he ceaseth to be a Minister to them any longer, as appeares in foure conclusions.

First, It is cleare from the Word, that a Pastor, or a Teacher in these dayes hath no Apostolicall power over all Churches, but onely limited to that one Church where God hath set him. *Paul* gives the Elders at *Ephesus* not a generall commission to go to teach all Churches, but to feed one flock, in which the holy Ghost hath made them Over-seers. *Act.* 20. 28. So *Peter* gives direction to Elders, to feed that flock of God onely which was amongst them, and to take the over-sight thereof. 1. *Pet.* 5. 2.

Secondly, It is as cleare, that all this power of feeding which the Minister hath in that church, is nextly derived to him from Christ, by the Church who hath solemnly called him to the worke, and promised to obey him therein; for if he hath it else-where, it must be either from Christ himself immediately, or from some others deputed by Christ to conferre it on him; or he must take it up himselfe. Not the first, for that was proper to the Apostles, or Apostolicall men: therefore *Paul* proving his Apostleship, saith, he *was called not of men, nor by men, but by Jesus Christ himselfe*, Gal. 1. 1. Not the second, for we never read in Gods Word of any ordinarie Officers, or others besides the Church, that had any Commission given them from Christ to call Ministers unto Churches;

Not

Not the third, for no man taketh this honour, (*viz.*) of a Priest, but he that is called of God, *Heb.* 5. 4. Therefore it must needs be from Christ by the Church.

Thirdly, as that Church in the name of Christ gave this power to a Minister, to be what he is, and to do what he doth amongst them; when such a Minister shall make and manifest himselfe apparently unworthy and unfit to discharge the place which they thus called him unto; so that they may discerne that Christ the head of the Church hath refused him, from being a Minister unto him; they may then upon as good grounds depose him from it, as they called him to it.

Fourthly, when a Church hath thus in Christs name put forth this power, of shutting, as before they did of opening to a Minister, then he must cease to be a Minister to them any more: For we have no such indeliable character imprinted upon a Minister, that he must needs be so for ever, because he once was so: his ministery ceasing, the Minister ceaseth also.

But secondly, In case the Church shall without cause, or a sufficient weightie cause, rashly or wilfully set him aside, whom Christ hath set over them; and whom they so solemnely called, and promised before the Lord to submit unto; and so abuse their power given them by Christ: It is doubtlesse a very great wrong unto the Minister, and sinne against Christ himself, before whom it was done; and not onely Christ himselfe will take it ill at their hands, for such contempt done to him in his Ministers (according to Christs speech, *Luk.* 10. 16. *He that rejecteth you, rejecteth me*: and Gods speech, 1. *Sam.* 8. 7. *They have not cast off thee, but cast off me.*) But even other Churches also may admonish them for it; and if they prove obstinate therein, withdraw the right hand of fellowship from them. And concerning the Minister himself thus deposed, seeing it is done not by Christ, but by the Church without Christ, yea against the mind of Christ, we conceive though he be by them deprived of the execution of his Ministery amongst them, yet untill he accepts of a call to another people, he still remaines a Minister of Christ, in whose account (notwithstanding such a deposition) he hath true right of Administration amongst the people.

POSITION the VIII.

That a Minister cannot perform any ministeriall Act in another Congregation.

Answ. IF you take (ministeriall act) improperly, as sometimes it is taken by some, onely when the Minister of one Church doth exercise his gifts of praying, and preaching in another Church, being by themselves so desired: Then we answer in this sence, a Minister of one Church may do a ministeriall act in another, which he doth not perform by vertue of any office, but onely by his gift. And thus upon any occasion we mutually performe these acts, one in anothers Churches. But if you meane (by ministeriall act) such an act of authoritie, and power in dispensing of Gods ordinance, as a Minister doth perform it to the Church, whereunto he is called to be a Minister; then we deny that he can so perform any ministeriall act, to any other Church but his own; because his office extends no further then his call. For that solemne charge in *Act.* 20. 28. is not to feed all flocks, but that flock onely over which the holy Ghost hath made them over-seers: If that Question were propounded to any Minister, so exercising in another Church, which was once to our Saviour by the chief Priests and Elders [*By what power doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authoritie?*] let that Minister, whosoever he be, study how to make an answer.

POSITION the IX.

That Members in one Congregation may not communicate in another.

Answ. THis Question (as the other) needs no long Answer, being altogether through misreport mistaken; for members of other Churches well known and approved, by vertue of communion of Churches, do mutually, and without exceptions communicate each of them at others Churches: even so often as Gods providence leads them thereunto, and themselves desire it.

FINIS.

D. Math
M. 38.1

